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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DEFENDING NARRATIVE UNITY

by

SUSAN TURNER

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

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Date: March 20/91

For Geneva, Katharine, Sean and sailor.

Abstract

My thesis, **Defending Narrative Unity**, studies the concept of "narrative unity" as it is developed by Alasdair MacIntyre in his 1981 book **After Virtue**. The first half of my project analyses MacIntyre's argument to the moral foundationalism of narrative unity by focussing on an implicit division therein between narrative action and narrative personhood. I tentatively conclude that MacIntyre's argument contains within it all that it needs to establish its central hypothesis - i.e. the view that whole human lives need to be viewed as unified things because that is what they are.

The second half of my project introduces criticism of MacIntyre's position as it is presented in the first half. Following MacIntyre's own lead, I divide this criticism into two sorts. The first, what I refer to as **foreign** criticism, comes from those philosophers who identify themselves with a set of philosophical principles falling outside of the set with which MacIntyre identifies himself. Specifically, these are the liberal individualists and libertarians of the modern and contemporary era. The second sort of criticism, what I refer to as **native** criticism, comes from within the tradition which MacIntyre himself identifies with. That tradition, the Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition, arguably includes both old and "new" natural law theorists. But the "old" are not so friendly to the "new". MacIntyre, as a member of the "new" natural law guard, must countenance objections raised by natural law theorists of the "grand tradition".

Although my evaluation of these two kinds of criticisms shows that they are misdirected and largely unsuccessful, it also raises questions about MacIntyre's traditionalism which bode ill for it in the end. My overall impression of his critics is that they fail because they have not fully appreciated the depth and scope of the argument to narrative unity as it is presented by MacIntyre. However, as it turns out, those criticisms capture certain correct intuitions about important weaknesses in MacIntyre's project.

I conclude that although the concept of narrative unity has a great deal of philosophical weight, given the exigencies of practical rationality, its philosophical scope is going to be very limited.

I would like to thank Professor Wes Cooper, Professor Cameron MacKenzie and Professor Roger Shiner for their interest and encouragement.

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Introduction

Since the publication of Alasdair MacIntyre's **After Virtue**[1], the book has come under both hostile and friendly fire for, **inter alia**, its less than clear arguments and its "startling"(395 MT)[2] theses. MacIntyre ends **After Virtue** on an optimistic note, claiming that although a new dark age of practical rationality is upon us there is yet cause for philosophical hope. I myself began this project with the view that MacIntyre's optimism at the end of **After Virtue** appeared to have come out of nowhere. My surprise arose because of what I took to be the soundness of MacIntyre's gloomy historical exigesis. But as I plunged more deeply into the text, my initial myopia corrected itself. I am still very sympathetic to the historical exegesis. But in the end, and in spite of their flaws, the very production of **After Virtue** and the very identity of its producer are enough to underscore MacIntyre's ending on a hopeful note. My thesis will not unravel every MacIntyrian mystery and so does not pretend to legitimize his overall project. But in giving studied attention to one of his central ideas - the concept of **narrative unity** - I will attempt to defuse the extent to which some of MacIntyre's conclusions in **After Virtue** seem to appear **ex nihilo**.

I think that, in general, MacIntyre's critics have failed to fully appreciate the details of his argument to narrative unity. And this should be cause for concern. For it suggests that MacIntyre's alarming description of the contemporary state of moral philosophy - as a hotbed of shallow and interminable debate resulting from an inherited loss of the "comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality"(2 AV) - may be closer to the truth of the matter than the working philosopher is willing or even worse **able** to admit.

---

1. MacIntyre, Alasdair, **After Virtue**, American edition, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981
2. Annas, Julia, "MacIntyre on Traditions"[MT], **Philosophy & Public Affairs**, Fall 1989, vol.18, no.4. Her comments are directed towards MacIntyre's subsequent book (MacIntyre, Alasdair, **Whose Justice? Which Rationality?**, University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) but insofar as the latter book is a more fully developed version of **After Virtue** and insofar as the sentiment is shared by others in respect of the latter, I consider the comment applicable in this case.

The place of the concept of narrative unity in MacIntyre's general argument is pivotal for reasons which will become clear as my thesis proceeds. But it is interesting and important for less obvious reasons as well. As I suggested above, although it is discussed in the critical literature, the concept of narrative unity seems to baffle many of its commentators.[3] Its mysteries compel further study. It may turn out to be the case that MacIntyre's argument to the concept of narrative unity is invalid. If it is invalid, this would explain the occurrence of "startling" conclusions in **After Virtue** in a much more charitable fashion than either MacIntyre's or my 'poor marks for comprehension' hypothesis does.

Finally, and of greatest incidental interest to me, is the sense in which the concept of narrative unity is faithfully manifested in the structure of MacIntyre's book itself. For, as you will see, **After Virtue** turns out to be its own best demonstration insofar as the concept of narrative unity and story of the fall and rise of intelligible moral philosophy mutually presuppose each other.

In Chapter One, I will begin the expository portion of my thesis. This will first require some preliminary remarks about narratives per se and MacIntyre's interest in them. Secondly, the first part of a detailed analysis of the concept of narrative unity itself will be presented. That analysis will be concluded in Chapter Two where I will continue with some commentary on MacIntyre's concept of a moral tradition and the definition of virtue which he leaves his reader with.

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[3] This bafflement, however, seems to reside chiefly in the critiques of those who are less than sympathetic to MacIntyre's ultimate recommendations. See J.B. Schneewind "Virtue, Narrative and Community..." (**JP**, Vol.LXXIX, No.11), W.J. Frankenna "MacIntyre and Modern Morality"(**Ethics**, Vol.93, April 1983). In addition, critiques of **Whose Justice? Which Rationality?** point out that there, MacIntyre's ideas, first displayed in **After Virtue**, "are made clearer". See Peter M. Schuller [review], (**Teaching Philosophy** 11:4, December 1988, p.373). There are studies of **After Virtue**, however, which are much friendlier to his methodology. See J.M. Cameron "Can We Live the Good Life?" (**The New York Review**, November 5, 1981) and especially Russell Hittinger [review],(**The New Scholasticism**, Vol.56, No.3, Summer 1982, p.385).

In Chapter Three, I shift gears and introduce the critical portion of my thesis. There, I present the "foreign" (i.e. liberal individualist) criticism of MacIntyre's project and attempt to defend that project in the light of what I have presented viz., the concept of narrative unity in the preceding chapters. Chapter Four deals specifically with MacIntyre's "native" critic, Russell Hittinger. Criticism coming from within the tradition which MacIntyre is attempting to support is of unique concern to him because his overall conclusions in **After Virtue** are clearly intended to preserve the core of that tradition. If native criticism is directed at what MacIntyre takes to be that core, as it appears to be in Hittinger's case, then it will be extremely important for MacIntyre to defend himself successfully if he wishes to remain on the "inside". In the Conclusion, I will review the argument to narrative unity, including its implications for moral traditions and its impact on MacIntyre's reconstruction of virtue. I will then suggest that in spite of serious weaknesses in his opponents' positions, some of their concerns with **After Virtue** are also my concerns.

Chapter One
Enter Narrative Unity

1.1 Introduction

At the end of Chapter 14 of **After Virtue**, "The Nature of the Virtues", MacIntyre concludes that his account of the virtues is incomplete. In order to 'keep in touch' with the Aristotelian tradition from whence it arises, it must address a question to which that tradition

> ...presupposed an answer, an answer so widely shared in the pre-modern world that it never had to be formulated explicitly in any detailed way. This question is: is it rationally justifiable to conceive of each life as a unity, so that we may try to specify each such life as having its good and so that we may understand the virtues as having their function in enabling an individual to make of his or her life one kind of unity rather than another?(189 AV)

Given the incoherencies and inconsistencies which MacIntyre argues arise when the idea of a life's unity is denied, we may infer that when MacIntyre tackles the above question in Chapter 15, his answer to it is going to be a resounding "yes". But even if we agree that contemporary moral philosophy is in a state of crisis and we fully accept MacIntyre's evidence for this, that acceptance does not require us further to give our rational assent to his particular conception of the **necessary** unity of a life - the concept of **narrative unity**.

For my purpose here, I will assume that morality is indeed in a state of theoretical and practical disorder and that MacIntyre's vision of what has led to this situation is acceptable. What he wants to lay further claim to is the recognition that the concept of narrative unity is the **best** - indeed the only - conceptual way out of both the crisis in moral philosophy and the crisis in practical moral reasoning which besiege us professionally and personally. MacIntyre will argue that it is the only sort of account of theoretical and practical moral agency which allows us to make sense of human freedom, human obligation and human responsibility. It is also, MacIntyre will argue, the only sort of account which explains why a life is the kind of thing which we think has a meaning. To gain our appreciation of the merits of the concept of narrative unity - our rational allegiance - MacIntyre leaves the errors of the past behind and advances to his positive argument for the reclamation of Aristotelian virtue-based ethics.

That positive argument unfolds in three stages. The first stage involves establishing a "background account" of what MacIntyre refers to as "practices". MacIntyre considers such an account to be necessary, based on one of the conclusions drawn from the first half of the book.

> One of the features of the concept of a virtue which has emerged with some clarity from the argument so far is that it always requires for its application the acceptance of some prior account of certain features of social and moral life in terms of which it has to be defined and explained.(174 AV)

A **virtue** at this preliminary stage is regarded by MacIntyre to be:

> **...an acquired human ability the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.** (178 AV) [emphasis in text]

A **practice** is in turn defined as:

> ...any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and **partially**[m/e] definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence and human conceptions of ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.(175 AV)[1]

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[1] MacIntyre describes the sort of good which is **internal** to a practice firstly by contrasting it to goods which are "contingent " or external to practices such as prestige or money. Then he says that "there are goods internal to the practice of chess which cannot be had in any way but by

But even with this rich concept of a practice,[2] the above definition of a virtue is inadequate. For it says nothing about how the individual is to proceed when the practices in which they are involved conflict with one another. J.B. Schneewind correctly tells us that according to MacIntyre, "...if this was the whole of virtue...there would re-emerge the threat that the virtues would seem to result from our own arbitrary choice of practices and the main point of re-working the virtue tradition would be lost." (656 VNC)[3]

MacIntyre acknowledges that this sort of arbitrariness must be avoided when he criticizes emotivist theories in the opening chapters of **After Virtue**.[4] Therefore, in order to

---

playing chess or some other game of that specific kind. We call them internal for two reasons:...first, ...we can only specify them...by means of examples from such games,...[second], they can only be identified and recognized by the experience of participating in the practice in question. Those who lack the relevant experience are incompetent thereby as judges of internal goods." (176 AV)

[2] MacIntyre gives some examples to help the reader out here."Tic-tac-toe is not an example of a practice in this sense, nor is throwing a football with skill; but the game of football is, and so is chess...so are the enquiries of physics, chemistry and biology, and so is the work of the historian, and so are painting and music...". Then almost as if he realizes that these are not of much help - "But the question of the precise range of practices is not at this stage of the first importance."(175 AV)

[3] Schneewind, J.B., "Virtue, Narrative, and Community", **The Journal of Philosophy**, Vol.LXXIX, no.11, Nov.1982 (VNC). See also **After Virtue**, pp.186-7.

[4] MacIntyre's criticism of emotivism is important but lengthy. In short, emotivism, for MacIntyre, is the view that, even when taken as reasoned conclusions, moral maxims are, at bottom, nothing more than expressions of an agent's emotional preferences for this or that state of affairs. In the case of what some emotivist views consider the necessary role of rationality in the selection and defense of these preferences (see Paul Taylor, "The Normative Function of Metaethics", **Philosophical Review**, Vol.67, 1958, pp.16-33), one is nevertheless always left with the 1st principle of emotivism where the choice to be rational rather than irrational is itself an arbitrary one. MacIntyre sees this "doctrine" as having thoroughly infected both modern moral philosophy and modern moral agents to the point where "there

strengthen his definition of virtue in the face of its putative weakness, MacIntyre prepares, in the second half of the book, to give that definition a firmer foundation. In the second stage of his recovery of virtue - the argument to narrative unity - MacIntyre lays the groundwork for a narrative definition of virtue which purports "to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter..."(204 AV) when virtue is conceived from a contemporary emotivist standpoint.

In the third stage of MacIntyre's reconstruction of a virtue-based ethic, he provides "an account a good deal fuller than [the one]...given up to now of what constitutes a moral tradition."(174 AV) In so doing, he completes his offer of a narrative definition of virtue. Since I am primarily interested in the groundwork of this definition, I will only be looking at this third stage in brief.

In concentrating on the concept of the narrative unity I shall begin by giving a general account of how MacIntyre implicitly derives his concept of narrative unity. Following this I will undertake a detailed examination of the concept itself in order to see whether or not it has sufficient content to generate MacIntyre's second stage definition of virtue - one which turns a virtue into something which really can avoid arbitrariness and overcome the dangers of emotivism.

The architectonic of MacIntyre's argument sees narrative unity as presupposing specific practices and these practices as presupposing specific moral traditions. MacIntyre elaborates his meaning in a somewhat compressed fashion:

> Each earlier stage is both modified by and reinterpreted in the light of, but also provides an essential constituent of each later stage. The progress in the development of the concept[of virtue] is closely related to, although it does not recapitulate in any straightforward way, the history of the tradition of which it forms the core.(174 AV)

If we expand on this a little, we will want to say that the concept of virtue which MacIntyre is after will be kin

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seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture."(6 AV)

to but not identical to that of any particular moral tradition which grows up around it. This open-ended interpretation of virtue is an extremely important feature of MacIntyre's overall project to recover the concept of virtue for contemporary moral philosophy, and it must be kept in mind at every stage of his argument. Given that MacIntyre identifies himself with the Aristotelian/Thomistic moral tradition, the point will be be returned to with interest when, in Chapter 4, I examine the encounter between MacIntyre's elastic concept of virtue and the natural law challenge to MacIntyre's general thesis.

1.2 From Whence Narrative Unity?

What it is about a narrative that captures MacIntyre's attention? To find out, I turn to the literary narrative[5]. The OCD defines "narrative" as:

> 1.n. tale, story, recital of facts, esp. story told in the first person; kind of composition or talk that confines itself to these.
>
> 2.a. in the form of, or concerned with narration; hence ~ly. (673 OCD),

and defines "narration" as:

> [a] continuous story or account of;...(ibid.)

It is clear from the sense of the term "narrative" itself that the idea of unity is already presumed within it. What does the idea of unity do within the narrative? An example will help to answer this question. Take **Goldilocks and the Three Bears**. This is a familiar North American children's story. It has a definite setting, several characters and a well-developed plot (i.e. clear beginning, middle and end). When **Goldilocks and the Three Bears** was in the midst of being composed - and we can imagine this to have taken place in any number of different ways - it would have been correct, when asked, "What are you doing?", for its composer to have answered, "I am composing a story". And this answer would have been the right answer even though the piece was unfinished. What is it about a story that lends itself to this sort of ambiguity - i.e. finished product or work in progress?

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[5] I say this simply because MacIntyre himself makes such extensive use of **these** narratives when he wants to demonstrate his philosophical points, illustrating the sense in which the literary narrative is prior to MacIntyre's concept.

What defines the narrative or story for MacIntyre is the sense in which **the selection of a setting guides the creation of the characters and the creation of the characters guides the progress of the action**. So that when in the midst of writing, I bring my characters face to face with a mystery, a dilemma or a challenge of some sort, and I must decide myself what will happen next, I firstly will refer to the particular sort of 'person' I envision each character to be and to the sorts of goals such characters might have. But I must also necessarily keep in mind the sorts of constraints imposed by my choice of setting and refer to **what has gone on so far** in the story for each character. What should I have Goldilocks do when she comes upon the little cottage in the middle of the forest? Well, she has already ventured out into the woods alone and so she's hardly timid. Yet although she is an adventurous sort, she is also an inexperienced child. Lucky for her these were civilized bears.

What the idea of 'unity' does in **literary** narrative is see to it that the settings, characters and events being described remain in constant touch with each other. Often though, when unity is 'stretched' to its limit over the surface of a story (e.g. as is the case in Lewis Carroll's **Alice in Wonderland**), it will be only be apparent in retrospect (e.g. "It was all a dream"). In any event, if the story is to be "intelligible" at all, the order of its contents must flow in a recognizable cause and effect manner even if the substantive nature of the causes and their effects is non-traditional or atypical (e.g. Tweedledee and Tweedledum recite a history lesson **so that** Alice's wet clothes will dry).

When the last episode in an actual sequence of episodes is traced back or the first cause traced forward via the cause and effect route in one continuous line to its beginning or to its conclusion, we have given or reproduced the unity implicit in that sequence of events. (When producing a fictional narrative, one may of course invoke literary license and shuffle chunks of the action around as long as one alerts the reader to this trick). Thus "to tell a **story**" or "To write a **story**" is just to orchestrate in a harmonic unity, so to speak, a number of separate settings, characters and events **by definition**.

For MacIntyre, what necessarily **occur** as separate events - e.g. man rides horse along road, man falls off horse, man becomes a "Christian" - can only be rationally metabolized by the human mind if they are accompanied by a unifying "history" which serves to put that man on that road, which accounts for his fall, and which tells us what happens to someone when they "become a Christian". Once again, in narrative terms, the setting guides the characters and the characters guide the action.

MacIntyre believes that in searching for such unifying background considerations, human beings act out their unavoidable and necessary epistemic predisposition towards meaning. MacIntyre believes that human beings are by **nature** "story-telling animal[s]"(201 AV). In the order of discovery, practical reason necessarily operates according to the unifying parameters of the narrative and these parameters are then discovered by reason in the practice itself of storytelling. If, for one reason or another, these parameters are dysfunctional or ignored (rather than 'stretched'), the result is unintelligible. To adhere to the narrative parameters of practical reason is for each in their own life to refer to what has gone on so far and to refer to the particular sort of person they envision themselves to be when choices must be made for the future. But, MacIntyre argues, these constraints need not commit us to the inevitability of determinism.

> If the narrative of our individual and social lives is to continue intelligibly - it is always both the case that there are constraints on how the story can continue and that within those constraints there are indefinitely many ways that it can continue.(201 AV)

"Constraints" here are understood to require the continuous reconciliation of the past and one's future goals to the present. In reconciling the past to the present, the present self is neither necessarily nor completely determined by the past self but is rather necessarily based on it. When we reconcile our present self to some image which we have of ourself for the future, we are not determined by that image but are necessarily **guided** by it. For MacIntyre, these are just descriptive facts about human behavior.

MacIntyre considers the narrative mode "to be the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human action."(195 AV) There is therefore an ongoing analogy in **After Virtue** between the way in which the traditional beginnings of a concept of virtue relate to such a concept as a whole, the way in which a story is started relates to that story as a whole, and the way in which my earliest self relates to my self as a whole. The substantial features of a given moral tradition, a story or a person's character are to be viewed in part as emergent properties of "what has gone on so far" and in part as the ground out of which future properties will emerge.

1.3 MacIntyre's Concept of Narrative Unity: An Overview

MacIntyre's commitment to the centrality of the narrative form is explicit and resolute. Well into his account of narrative unity, MacIntyre concludes that:

> There is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources. Mythology, in its original sense, is at the heart of things.(201 AV)

What does MacIntyre have in mind when he appeals to mythology in "its original sense"? The late renowned mythologist Joseph Campbell gives us several clues in the foreword to his book **The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology**[6]. There he invites the reader to explore an idea which strikes Campbell as eminently plausible. That idea is:

> ...of the unity of the race of man, not only in its biology but also in its spiritual history, which has everywhere unfolded in the manner of a single symphony, with its themes announced, developed, amplified and turned about, distorted, reasserted, and, today, in a grand **fortissimo** of all sections sounding together, irresistably advancing to some kind of mighty climax, out of which the next great movement will emerge.(v MG)

No doubt Campbell was more optimistic then about contemporary moral and spiritual states of affairs than MacIntyre is now. But in any event, the original sense of "mythology" to which MacIntyre is appealing is arguably the same sense of mythology used by Campbell. Myth is the narrative instrument by which the spiritual and moral history of a people is chronicled - i.e. **packaged** - for transmission from one setting to another and from one generation to another. Campbell finds that the many common genres of traditionally diverse mythologies are an indication of the fundamental status and universal character of story-telling.[7] And although MacIntyre might not share Campbell's enthusiasm for the integrity of all of those diverse traditions[8], Campbell clearly shares MacIntyre's enthusiasm for mythology.

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[6] Campbell, Joseph, **The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology**, Viking Press New York 1959, 1969.

1.4 The Strategic Defense of Narrative Unity

I will be breaking MacIntyre's argument for narrative unity into two parts - each part will in turn consist of five stages or steps. The first part of MacIntyre's argument addresses **the narrative concept of human action**. The second part of the argument concludes in MacIntyre's **narrative concept of selfhood** and offers a provisional conclusion about the "good life for man".

Part One begins with a preliminary hypothesis about the nature of human action. It goes on to define a "setting" for the purposes of the entire argument. MacIntyre then highlights the importance of intentions and beliefs as these derive from settings and conclude in actions. He continues, emphasizing the necessary criterion of "intelligibility" when it comes to understanding and judging those actions and he finally brings all of the above together into the concept of an "enacted narrative", where "action itself has a basically historical character."(197 AV)

---

[7] It has been many years since I first studied Campbell and **Masks**.... But when I wanted an account of "mythology in its original sense", I remembered exactly where to go. I re-read with great excitement the first few introductory pages of Campbell's book and strongly recommend the foreword and the prologue for a wonderful glimpse into what I believe MacIntyre means by the above. There are differencces, of course, between the two projects, but the similarities are striking nonetheless. (see pp.v-ix and 3-18 op.cit.)

[8] In Chapter 9 (AV), MacIntyre examines the Polynesian concept of "taboo" culled from the records of Captain Cook's third voyage to the Islands and finds it to be wanting in respect of what MacIntyre considers to be a traditional concept "in good order". I do not believe that Campbell would be as quick to dismiss the integrity of the tradition which gave rise to this concept as MacIntyre is, but I will not argue the point here.

Part Two begins with a more robust definition of action. It goes on to demonstrate the ways in which unpredictability and teleology work together in each individual life. MacIntyre then evaluates the more popular positions on personal identity in terms of what has gone on so far in his argument and takes a crack himself at a **narrative** concept of selfhood. He finally brings the conclusion from **Part One** in together with the conclusions he draws here to answer one of the questions which he sets for himself at the beginning of his discussion, "In what does the narrative unity of a life consist?".

To go into a penetrating and thorough analysis of MacIntyre's entire second stage argument to a recovery of virtue would be inappropriate here due to the sheer depth and scope of it. But at minimum, a serious review of the steps which MacIntyre takes to arrive at a viable definition of virtue is needed if we are to properly assess any of the positions taken against it.

1.5 Action

MacIntyre's initial hypothesis about the nature of human action is that our way of describing it necessarily presupposes a relationship between a particular action's intended consequences or unintended consequences and whether the agent is aware or unaware of either or both of these.[9] MacIntyre dismisses positivistic theories of action. His complaint is that in recommending an atomic theory of action - i.e. where each action is individuated and evaluated out of context - positivism fails to explain why lives are viewed as something more than a mere sequence of episodes - why they are things which are said to have or lack meaning. He uses the example of a man busy in a garden to highlight his initial assumption that "one and the same segment of human behavior may be correctly characterized in a number of ways."(192 AV) We might want to answer the question "What is he doing?" by saying that he is "digging" or "gardening" or

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[9] See discussion p.192 AV. Note especially: "What is important to notice immediately is that any answer to the questions of how we are to understand or to explain a given segment of behavior will presuppose some prior answer to the question of how ... different correct answers to the question 'What is he doing' are related to each other."

"taking exercise" or "preparing for winter" or "pleasing his wife" and so on. As we can see from the example, MacIntyre claims that when we evaluate and subsequently describe behavior (or action), we necessarily situate it in a context or "setting". Examples of such settings in the case of the gardener might be an "annual cycle of domestic activity, or a household-cum-garden context with its own family history, or yet again within the framework of a marriage or distinct social setting." (192 AV)

1.5 Settings

MacIntyre uses the term 'setting' to refer to "...an institution,...a practice,...[or] a milieu of some other human kind."(192 AV) Central to the concept of a setting however is that the setting has a history,

> ...within which the histories of individual agents not only are but have to be, situated, just because without the setting and its changes through time, the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible. (ibid.)

MacIntyre adds that the same instance of behavior may belong to more than one setting. What settings provide are the terms in which the agent frames their beliefs and intentions. Indeed they often (and MacIntyre will want to argue that at the start - always) provide the very content of those beliefs and intentions.

1.5 Intentions and Beliefs

The first point which MacIntyre wants to make about intentions is that there is an important public quality to them in spite of the fact that they are often regarded as something entirely internal to the agent. That public quality is the way in which the agent's intentions **help others** to characterize the agent's overt behavior. In order to understand just how knowing the agent's intentions help others to characterize the agent's behavior, MacIntyre says that:

> ...we shall have to understand in a precise way how the variety of correct characterizations of

> the agent's behavior relate to each other by first identifying which characteristics refer us to an intention and which do not and then by further classifying the items in both categories.(193 AV)

In order to understand and correctly evaluate someone's behavior then, it is necessary for both the agent and those responding to the agent's behavior to be able to formulate an account of how the behavior and relevant intentions are to be understood **as a whole**. To this end, MacIntyre makes a murky two-stage distinction which results in two general categories and four sub-categories of intentions. The two general categories separate primary intentions (i.e. effective or causal) from non-primary intentions(i.e. non-effective or non-causal). The sub-categories separate each general category along temporal lines producing short and long term primary intentions and short and long term non-primary intentions.

MacIntyre suggests that intentions can be identified as primary if and only if it is the case that "had the agent intended otherwise, he would not have performed that action."(193 AV) In other words, MacIntyre takes all primary intentions to be **directly causal** intentions. In order to find out which of the agent's intentions are causal in this way, we must determine which beliefs the agent has. We **need to ask** them, for example, whether or not they would continue to believe that "'x' was good" if it came to their attention that "'x' caused 'y' or 'z'". If the agent would not continue to hold the belief that "'x' is good" under these circumstances, then others may infer that the agent believes that 'y' and/or 'z' are undesirable. This latter belief would be identified as causal with respect to intention. An intention which rested on this belief would be something like:"I want to avoid 'y' and/or 'z'" and would in turn be primary or causal with respect to behavior. The agent's behavior - "'x'ing" - would either be properly characterized in terms of its following from the causal intention or not characterizable at all.

What is presupposed in this discussion is the need for effective **communication** between the agent and the other who is called upon to respond to or simply assess the agent's behavior.[10] As the result of this communication, the agent's intentions and the beliefs which motivate them come to light. Given the specifics of the agent's overt behavior and the commensurability of those specifics to the agent's primary intentions and beliefs, a story may then be told about what the agent is actually doing when they are doing 'x'.

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[10] MacIntyre also takes this sort of communication to be essential viz. the possibility of understanding traditions other than one's own. His discussion of inter-tradition

In short, MacIntyre is arguing here that we cannot make sense of individual behavior without reference to an agent's intentions and we cannot make sense of those intentions without reference to the beliefs which antecede them. Beliefs are always and only generated within and therefore dependent for their intelligibility upon a \"setting" of cultural traditions, historical contingencies and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, according to MacIntyre, we cannot understand - and so cannot even begin to evaluate morally - a particular instance of human behavior unless we are apprised and cognizant of where this or that particular behavior fits into the larger whole of a person's life and of where that person's life fits into the larger whole of their traditional community.[11] The progression of MacIntyre's argument leads us inexorably to the hypothesis that if we are to rationally metabolize human behavior - if we are to see it as meaningful - then we must also 'take in' the larger whole of the traditional community from whence that behavior arises. For MacIntyre, the question of whether or not one finds meaning in behavior or action is a question about what sort of entity one is and not one about human preferences. Since we are talking about human beings here, MacIntyre may validly conclude that human behavior cannot be intelligible and denuded of its traditional community context.

MacIntyre's claims about action and behavior are very strongly contrasted with what he takes to be the traditional analytic position on action. Behavior, for MacIntyre, simply cannot be made any sense of unless it is seen as as it is - intimately embedded within an 'intentions - beliefs - settings' matrix or what MacIntyre would describe as a traditional community. He says that:

> There is no such thing as 'behavior' to be identified prior to and independently of intentions, beliefs and settings. Hence the

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"translatability" can be found in Chapter One of **After Virtue** and is recommended.

11. See discussion p.192 AV.

> project of a science of behavior takes on a somewhat mysterious and outre character. (194 AV)

Underlying MacIntyre's discussion of intentions and the role which they play in the concept of narrative unity are two points. One - often repeated - is worth mentioning again. When either the agent asks of themself firstly "What am I doing?" or a responder/observer asks of the agent "What are you doing?", the answers to these preliminary questions involve "the writing of a narrative history"(194 AV) of a particular sort. Thus the answer to a second question - "What **ought** I to do?" or "Should you be doing that?" - necessarily presumes the continuation of **that** narrative. In order to be continuous with the narrative, the answer must be **intelligible** given the answer to the first. Just what does MacIntyre have in mind with the term "intelligibility"?

1.7 Intelligibility and Accountability

MacIntyre has this to say about the concept of intelligibility:

> The importance of the concept of intelligibility is closely related to the fact that the most basic distinction of all embedded in our [moral] discourse and practice is that between human beings and other human beings. Human beings can be held accountable for that of which they are the authors; other beings cannot. To identify an occurrence as an action is in the paradigmatic instances to identify it under a type of description which enables us to see that occurrence as flowing intelligibly from a human agent's intentions, motives, passions and purposes. It is therefore to understand an action as something for which someone is accountable, about which it is always appropriate to ask the agent for an intelligible account. (195 AV)

For MacIntyre, the force of "ought" in "one ought to do 'x'" derives from this idea of accountability. What one ought to do is what one does best and is therefore able, prepared and willing to give a unified account of.

There are a number of considerations here "which are involved in making the notion of intelligibility the conceptual connecting link between the notion of action and that of the narrative."(199 AV). MacIntyre thinks that the importance of the narrative form which **conversation** takes "is the form of human transactions in general" but that this fact tends by and large to escape philosophical attention. To begin with, that a conversation is "intelligible" is shown to be distinct from its being "understandable" when one considers, for example, what goes on when someone 'eavesdrops.'[12] This is to say that in order for a conversation to be intelligible, it has to be characterizable as this or that **sort** of talk and not merely as "talk" per se. Secondly and following from the first point, MacIntyre mentions the sense in these "sorts" resemble the various "genres"(196 AV) to which literary narratives are allocated, for example, "'a tragic misunderstanding of each other'[tragedy],...'a drunken rambling quarrel'[struggle]".(ibid.)

Thirdly, there is a distinct dramatic quality to every conversation where the "participants are not only the actors, but also the joint authors, working out in agreement or disagreement the mode of their production."(196 AV) Fourthly, conversations necessarily have "beginnings, middles and ends...reversals and recognitions...digressions and subplots...digressions within digressions and subplots within subplots" (ibid.) - that is they are carried out in the same way that any literary narrative is. MacIntyre concludes that,

> ...if [all of the above] is true of conversations, it is also true , **mutatis mutandis**, of battles, chessgames, courtships, philosophy seminars, families at the dinner table, businessmen negotiating contracts - that is of human transactions in general. (197 AV)

The upshot for individual lives is that to be intelligible, the agent's actions and behavior must conform to the formal constraints imposed by narrative unity, but as was highlighted earlier, "anything" can happen within those constraints. When the intelligibility of behavior does rely on the action of narrative unity, we may say that that our lives properly constitute "enacted narratives".(197 AV) When the intelligibility of behavior does not rely on the action of narrative unity, we may conclude that a terrible accident has occurred.[13]

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[12] See discussion p.196 AV. It is MacIntyre's distinction here between something's being "understandable" and its being "intelligible" which cause me throughout my thesis to avoid taking the term "understandable" as equivalent to the term "intelligible". This has posed considerable difficulties and I have attempted to avoid the illegitimate conflation by referring to the popular sense of "understanding" as "rational metabolization". I have left off explaining this point until now because to have attempted it earlier would have demanded that I get too far ahead of myself, risking utter confusion.

1.8 Enacted Narratives

For MacIntyre, every human action is characterized by the enacted narrative of which it is a part. He says that "action itself has a basically historical character."(198 AV) Even in the most ordinary of human actions, we unfold an historical drama which is in part authored by us alone and in part co-authored by others.

Here, MacIntyre is clearly arguing against the literalist objection that "stories are **told** not lived"[14]. This objection affirms that stories are nothing more than **aides memoires**; nothing more than the ad hoc concatenations of various life events. As such, stories are prone to frequently misrepresent the actual nature of the events which they purport to describe by attributing to those events certain meanings which they did not originally have. But by pointing to what he takes to be the fact that we do actually identify beginnings, middles and ends in life - we bestow inaugural or terminal status in **medias res**, as it were, (e.g. conception, birth, baptism, initiation, death, retirement, graduation, sentencing and everything in between and so on) - MacIntyre is certain that the literalist objection cannot stand. We may make mistakes about when certain stories begin, how they proceed or where they end, but MacIntyre insists that it does not follow from the fact that we err, that stories may not be conceived as works in progress. Stories are not merely ways of describing what we have done, they are the modes of what we do.

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[13] I refer here to remarks made in MacIntyre's introductory doomsday scenario, "A Disquieting Suggestion".(1 AV) There MacIntyre imagines that a great cataclysm or catastrophe wipes out most of the collected knowledge of man. He later suggests that something like this at a conceptual level seems to have occurred in the 18th century. In light of those remarks, my claims here are ones which I believe MacIntyre would agree with. But they raise an extremely vexing issue for him and one which I am loathe to tackle here. Very briefly, what MacIntyre refers to in several places as an "unintelligible narrative" is simply an incomprehensible complex concept. If unity is presupposed in the concept of narrative, how can there be such a thing as an 'un-unified' narrative? I think that MacIntyre must commit himself to the very strong claim that where there is disunity or unintelligibility there just is **no** narrative at all and that an absence of narrative unity can only be explained as the result of an accidental and never an intentional failure of reason. This point will be taken up further in a somewhat different context in my final concloosions.

[14] See discussion p.197 AV.

Gathering up everything that has gone on so far in his argument, MacIntyre imposes two criteria on the successfully enacted narrative. The first is that an individual's account of "what has gone on so far" must be intelligible. That is to say, it must exhibit the formal properties of narrative unity. The second criterion is that this account must be substantively **true**. Whether or not the particular details of the account are true will be relatively simple to ascertain given that, according to MacIntyre, it is "only in fantasy [that] we live what story we please."(199 AV)

In real life, each individual is necessarily ensconced within a number of narrative histories, and all but one will be the narratives of others. We can push the theatrical analogy a little further. Although we are 'stars' in our own dramas, we nevertheless play supporting roles, have walk-on parts and act as extras in the narratives of others who, in turn, appear in our own. MacIntyre says that "each of our dramas exerts constraints on each others, making the whole different from the parts, but still dramatic."(199 AV) For example, it will be difficult for anyone who remains in the company of others to get away cleanly with 'living a lie' when it is true that their actions and behavior are observable and indeed, constrained, in virtue of their close proximity to the actions and behavior of others.

Finally, we must note the way in which MacIntyre conceives of the architecture of multiple enacted narratives. There are two ways in which narratives may be connected to one another. The first was implicit in the discussion of "settings" (above s.1.5). There I mentioned that MacIntyre considered it true that behavior could belong to more than one setting. How would this come about? It would come about through what MacIntyre sees as the inevitability of intersecting histories. The example of the gardener earlier shows us that "the agent's activity may be part of the history both of the cycle of household activity and of his marriage, two histories which have happened to intersect."(192 AV)

The second way in which narrative histories may be connected to one another is via the process of "embedding." MacIntyre starts with some examples of what he has in mind,

> ...the play within the play in **Hamlet**, Wandering Willie's tale in **Redgauntlet**, Aeneas' narrative to Dido in book 2 of the **Aeneid**, and so on. (198 AV)

The more transparent examples come, however, when MacIntyre cites actual cases of embedded narratives, one of which is the history of the American Confederacy as it takes place within the history of the United States; another is the story of Mary Stuart and its embeddedness in the reign of Elizabeth I. Agents need not necessarily know or acknowledge that their lives and traditions are involved to either extent in the lives of others or in other traditions for it to be the case that they are. Or it may be that:

> ...what seemed to be an intelligible narrative in which one was playing a part... [is] transformed wholly or partly into a story of unintelligible episodes...(It is no accident that Kafka could not end his novels, for the notion of an ending like that of a beginning has its sense only in terms of intelligible narrative.) (198 AV)

1.9 Review

Let us review the argument of Part One before going on to Part Two. We bring forward the following claims. A human life can neither be made sense of from the agent's point of view nor from anyone else's point of view if it is merely regarded as a sequence of unrelated episodes. If an episode is in turn regarded as a series of unrelated actions, then the problem of unintelligibility goes even deeper. The fabric within which particular actions and episodes are bound and which cannot be dismissed is the fabric of an historical "setting". Historical settings give rise not only to the language in which specific beliefs and intentions are couched but also provide the initial content of those beliefs and intentions. Settings ground but never determine human actions, characters and lives in turn. Like Goldilocks or Alice, we enact the narrative as long as all the elements of our own particular narrative histories remain in constant touch with one another. If a particular characterization of a particular action fails to narratively unite that action to the other elements in the narrative, that characterization cannot help but be unintelligible to human reason. It can never be a proper account of rational human action.

Chapter Two

Narrative Unity: The Second Act

2.1 Introduction

In what I refer to as **Part Two** of MacIntyre's argument to narrative unity, MacIntyre develops his own narrative account of personal identity. Recall from s.1.3 (above), that MacIntyre began with what was for the most part a negative definition of action resulting from a challenge to the positivistic view that actions may be assessed atomistically. MacIntyre's rejection of positivism and a positivistic action theory in the first phase of his argument was based on the following line of thought. According to that theory human actions, episodes, events etc., are correctly and so necessarily assessed atomistically. That is these things are, in fact, **atomic** things. But, MacIntyre argued, these things are not atoms; are not simples in the deep atomistic sense. Although such things as episodes of human behavior **occur** separately, their separate occurrence is simply a necessary feature of their spatio-temporal character. This character of behavior places it within a set of formal constraints - i.e. narrative constraints - which intimately conjoins specific behaviors to their historical context(s) via, **inter alia**, language and collateral behaviors. To the extent that positivism is committed to the facticity of behavioral atomism, MacIntyre concludes that positivism is just wrong. For him, lives **are** correctly and necessarily viewed as more than a mere sequence of events,

> hence it is not inappropriate to begin by scrutinizing some of our most taken-for-granted, but clearly correct conceptual insights about actions and selfhood in order to show how natural it is to think of the self in a narrative mode. (192 AV).

MacIntyre considers the "fact" of narrative unity to be so overwhelming, that to ignore or doubt it is to threaten the only basis upon which human beings comprehend their own existence and the existence of others. The purpose of reintroducing the question of narrative action at this stage is to show how one may proceed from a fully narrative account of action to what MacIntyre takes to be the much more pressing problem of formulating a theory of the enacted self.

2.2 Action

The definition of a human action which MacIntyre offers us in this second part of his narrative unity argument is as follows:

> An action is a moment in a possible or actual history or in a number of histories. The notion of a history is as fundamental a notion as the notion of an action. Each requires the other. (199 AV)

Against this definition, MacIntyre lodges the direct existential objection that to conceive of an action or choice as a part of an historical narrative is necessarily to falsify it - i.e. to impose an order where none exists.[1] In response, MacIntyre is incredulous. He asks firstly how a mere assortment of actions or choices without the narrative 'filler' could be **represented**. He answers that such an assortment cannot help but look like the items in a "travelogue" - like the "plainly disjointed parts of a possible narrative."(200 AV) All the way down, MacIntyre argues, the subject matter of ethics - choosing the good - resists non-narrative evaluation even by those who believe that non-narrative evaluation is exactly what they are doing. MacIntyre is relying here on the authenticity and force of man's natural and fruitful disposition towards synthesis. This disposition characterizes attempts to 'make sense of' seemingly unrelated actions and making sense of such actions is just to be able to see them in their proper context. It is true that in the act of synthesizing, we often see the wrong context - tell the wrong story about what is going on. But this is a specific failure of information or rigor and not of synthesis per se.

Secondly and in more general opposition to the notion of radical action or choice, MacIntyre claims that "like the characters in a fictional narrative, we do not know what will happen next"(201 AV) - and that we simply cannot begin where we please, go where we please or end where we please. But this inability to maneuver is exactly what the existentialist is trying to avoid when the claim is made that narratives impose order where none actually exists. That I '[know] what will happen next' in the sense of my having ultimate **control** over my destiny is the sole guarantor of my existential freedom. As long as there is no actual and **a fortiori** no imposed order on the events of my life, I am completely free to make it up however I see fit as I go along.

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[1] See discussion p.199 AV. This discussion follows MacIntyre's attack on Mink (see fn.9 s.1.7 in Chapter 1) where MacIntyre defends the claim that stories are **not** merely told, they are lived as well.

The problem for this claim is that it is self-defeating. For to live in a world in which there was this kind of absolute freedom would be to live in a world where everything was absolutely pre-determinate and so it would be to live in no possible world. It is therefore not only characteristic of but also essential to the possibilty of human freedom, that "no one is in charge."(101 AV) To the extent that narrative unity connects our decisions about our own lives with, **inter alia**, the decisions and lives of others, existentialists and others see narrative unity as an **imposition** or burden on a life. MacIntyre shows instead, that this connectedness alone guarantees human freedom and all that is important in human life.

We are reminded here of the actor/author dual role which each agent takes on within their own narrative. When MacIntyre refers to the "actor" in us, he is referring to the sense in which our lives are in part 'scripted' for us - that we "never really start **ab initio**, [but] plunge in **medias res**, the beginnings of [our] story already made for [us] by what and who has gone before."(200 AV). Our authorship, on the other hand, consists in what we make of those beginnings. Although my choice on a given day is never entirely determined in advance, the character of my options always is.[2] For MacIntyre, the character of those options is

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2. I think this point is made out very effectively in the film "Sophie's Choice" where the actress Meryl Streep plays a Polish mother arrested with her two children by the Nazis. In the line awaiting either admittance into the camp or delivery to the gas chamber, Sophie is asked by a German officer to choose which of her children he ought to spare along with her. The substance of her actual choice, though not determined in advance, nevertheless characterizes all of her choices hence in just the same way that her previous

an integral part of describing any action or choice arising from them - i.e. you can take the action out of the context but you cannot take the context out of the action.

Before going on to the question of unpredictability per se, we need, once again, to emphasize the relationship between rational **qua** intelligible actions and narrative history and its significance in MacIntyre's moral theory. For MacIntyre, it is not the case that only one of the pair follows from the other. His claim is rather that each presupposes the other.

To understand the importance of what MacIntyre is claiming, I suggest the following analogy. Let us view narrative unity as the vehicle of intelligibility and intelligibility as the reason for narrative unity. They are not the same thing. Like leaves(as the vehicle of...) and the process of photosynthesis(as the reason for...), narrative unity and intelligibility mutually presuppose each other. But, in spite of the fact that nature unaided requires that leaves and photosynthesis presuppose each other, it is possible to **imagine** photosynthesis taking place in a different (say **artificial**) context. The context must not however be so dissimilar from a leaf that the occurrence of photosynthesis within such a distinct context would suggest an error in the original model. The new context would have to be, therefore, continuous with the old, though it need not be identical to it. Our understanding of photosynthesis and leaves would be thereby **extended** though in no way **overturned**.

Let us now put intelligibility in the place of photosynthesis and narrative unity in the place of the leaf. The analogy works like this. Although human nature requires that narrative unity and intelligibility presuppose each other, we may **imagine** intelligibility taking place in a different context. What this might be like I cannot imagine, but presumably, this is just a peculiar failing of **mine** and without it, I might be a great inventor or science fiction writer. Again, this could not be a context so dissimilar from the concept of narrative unity itself that it would suggest an error in the original relationship between narrative unity and intelligibility. If this is a fair analogy, MacIntyre can get his conclusion that via narrative unity "human powers to achieve excellence...are systematically extended"(175 AV) without those powers being overturned. In order for this extension to occur in the

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choices - to have children for example - characterized her options at the camp's gate.

first place, it must be the case that intelligibility and narrative unity are entwined but not identical.

I have glanced here at the notion of unpredictability with respect to MacIntyre's action theory. In the next section, I add some detail to this notion and examine a second - MacIntyre's concept of **partial** teleology.

2.3 Unpredictability and Teleology

MacIntyre first introduces the idea of unpredictability in Chapter 8, "The Character of Generalisations in Social Science and their Lack of Predictive Power."(84 AV) There MacIntyre takes aim at the Enlightenment view of explanation, which is "to invoke a law-like generalization retrospectively"(88 AV) and calls upon Niccolo Machiavelli to highlight the Enlightenment's failure in this regard. Machiavelli was as excited by the possibility of providing "maxims for enlightened practice"(ibid.) as was the Enlightenment after him, but his belief in **Fortuna** (ibid.) clearly distinguished him from that later tradition. MacIntyre acknowledges Machiavelli's notion of fortune as the ineliminable feature of unpredictability:

> ...given the best possible stock of law-like generalisations, we may on the day be defeated by an unpredicted and unpredictable counter-example - and yet still see no way to improve upon our generalisations and still have no reason to abandon them or even to reformulate them. We can by improvements in our knowledge limit the sovereignty of **Fortuna**, bitch-goddess of unpredictability; we cannot dethrone her. (89 AV)[3]

MacIntyre claims that since unpredictability is ineliminable, permanent, and necessary, "our social order is in a very literal sense out of our, and indeed anyone's, control. (101 AV) That "anything may happen" within the confines of narrative unity is inextricably woven into the "narrative structure of human life, and the empirical generalisations and explorations which social scientists discover provide a kind of understanding of human life which is perfectly compatible with that structure."(200 AV).

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[3] See **The Prince**, Niccolo Machiavelli, Chapter XXV "How Much Fortune Can Do In Human Affairs And How It May Be Opposed".

MacIntyre's point is that we may generalize about what has gone on so far; but we may not regard these generalizations as "law-like" because they can never apprehend the entirety of what goes on within any given narrative. **Fortuna** will not be captured.

In addition to unpredictability, MacIntyre holds that "...our lives have a certain form which projects itself towards our future. Thus the narratives which we live out have both an unpredictable and a partially teleological character."(201 AV) We are, in addition to being actors in our own narratives, authors of them as well. We select ends by 'imaging' our future and this imaging partially informs our present decisions. MacIntyre says that:

> There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future and an image of the future which always presents itself in the form of a **telos** - or a variety of ends or goals - towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present. (201 AV)

Unpredictability and teleology co-exist as analogues to the actor and author in every enacted narrative. Unpredictability or actorship is the possibility of human freedom. Human freedom is the possibility of moral agency. Without **Fortuna**, there would be no moral quality to human action. Teleology or authorship is the immanence in the present of chosen ends insofar as everything we do now is guided by some expectation for our future. Those expectations, if they are to be realistic, must in turn allow that "we may on the day be defeated by an unpredicted and unpredictable" occurrence.

From here MacIntyre launches his "central thesis" - the narrative concept of selfhood. He sets up his concept by considering two other general theories of personal identity. I look at these below.

2.4 Personal Identity

For MacIntyre, it is centrally true that man's essential nature is that of a "story-teller."(201 AV) Here we meet up with the matter of mythology which was discussed earlier(above s.1.3). We must keep in mind that when

MacIntyre refers to mythology or story-telling, he does not intend to suggest that there is anything prevaricated underlying the intelligibility of human behavior.

MacIntyre shifts the focus of narrative unity directly on to **personal identity** by drawing an analogy between his definition of a narrative action - as a moment which is only theoretically abstracted from its history - and his definition of the narrative self as an abstracted character which is similarly encumbered.[4] Arriving at this narrative definition of the self first involves examining two directions in which received theories of personal identity tend to go. Derek Parfit(**Reasons and Persons** 1986) is credited by MacIntyre as one of those who has brought these matters to our attention. The two senses in which one is currently apt to regard personal identity are distinguished as follows:

a) All or Nothing

This involves the attribution of strict identity where 'a' always equals 'a'. It is what MacIntyre calls an "all or nothing matter"[5] and Leibniz's Law of the excluded middle is said to apply.

Adherents of this position tend to be Non-Reductionists, Cartesian dualists, Kantian Rationalists, theists, existentialists, etc. There are practical(e.g forensic) advantages but theoretical disadvantages(e.g. what is/are the criterion/a of identity?) to holding this position.

b) More or Less

This is exactly the way in which Parfit himself understands personal identity(or lack of it really) and is the notion of "psychological continuity" (201 AV) or what Parfit calls "Relation R"(215 RP)[6]. This way of cashing(or drowning) out personal identity is what MacIntyre prefers to call "a matter of more or less".(201 AV)

Adherents of this position tend to be Reductionists, Humean Empiricists, analytic philosophers, etc. Contrasted with

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[4] That is "you can take the boy out of Texas but you can't take Texas out of the boy". Or some such thing.

[5] See discussion p. 201-202 AV.

[6] Parfit, Derek, **Reasons and Persons**, Oxford University Press, 1986.

(a), this position has theoretical advantages(e.g. offers a criterion of identity per se) but has practical disadvantages (e.g. how can the **actus reus** be established for long past war crimes?)

The practical difficulties with (b) arise because in spite of the lack of hard evidence for any strict criterion of personal identity, we must rely upon strict identity for the distribution of social responsibilities, the attribution of guilt and innocence, not to mention the carrying on from moment to moment in the security that things and people are what they have always been.

There are, however, theoretical disadvantages to going on according to approach (a). For example, given a system of law which is based in part on the notion of just desert, we can hardly justify the **imputation** of strict identity **merely** on the basis that it is always practically advantageous to do so. And so, the difficulty with (a) is that as it stands, it really cannot be anything more than a procedural or artificial account of the self where,

> I am forever what I have been at any time for others - and I may at any time be called upon to answer for it - **no matter how changed I may be now.** (202 AV my emphasis)

Inspite of specific difficulties with both approaches, MacIntyre still favors approach (a) over approach (b). The reason is simply that although he considers the theoretical problems in (a) to be important, they are fixable. The practical problems with (b) are equally important, but, says MacIntyre, they are intractable.

By recognizing the forensic self of the "all or nothing" variety as a character abstracted from a substantive narrative, it is no longer of merely instrumental value to impute strict identity to it over time. It is to refer to that self as it is **in practice**. For people like Parfit, this view of the self is philosophically and practically suffocating.[7] And Parfit's view that "the truth is very different from what we are inclined to believe" is acceptable to MacIntyre only to the extent that these inclinations are unexamined. In the case of personal identity, the inclination to view it as an "all or nothing"

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7. See p.281 op.cit., for Parfit's discussion "Liberation from the Self".

proposition is not the unreasoned prejudice which Parfit makes it out to be. MacIntyre says that,

> ...just as a history is not a sequence of actions, but the concept of an action is that of a moment in an actual or possible history abstracted for some purpose from that history, so the characters in a history are not a collection of persons, but the concept of a person is that of a character abstracted from history. (202 AV)

MacIntyre proceeds directly from this critique to the task of formulating a concept of selfhood in narrative terms.

2.5 The Narrative Concept of Selfhood

MacIntyre begins by identifying two related aspects of the narrative concept of a self. These are the subjective and the objective aspects of its accountability. The first aspect refers to fact that "I am the **subject** of a history that is mine and no one else's."(202 AV) To be the subject of one's narrative in this way is to be personally accountable for every action, choice etc., in which that narrative consists. "Without such unity", MacIntyre says, "there would not be subjects of whom stories could be told."(203 AV) MacIntyre clarifies what he has in mind here by giving an example of what a self without this sort of subjective accountability would look like:

> When someone complains - as do some of those who attempt or commit suicide - that his or her life is meaningless, he or she is often and perhaps characteristically complaining that the narrative of their life has become unintelligible to them, that it lacks any point, any movement towards a climax or a **telos**. Hence the point of doing any one thing rather than another at crucial junctures in their lives seems to such a person to have been lost. (202 AV)

MacIntyre sees the unity implicit in an enacted narrative as the necessary (and natural as opposed to artificial) ground for being able to say of someone, who may be characterized quite differently at different times or by different people, that he or she is , in any event - "one and the same person"(203 AV). And to be able to say this is in turn a necessary condition for the just ascription of personal responsibility.

But, in the case of long past war crimes, for example, Parfit will argue that where the ascription of personal responsibilty is contingent on our establishing a material connection between the act and the defendant, such an ascription will be unjustifiable simply because there will be no such material connection. MacIntyre cannot accept this line because, as he sees it, the failure to turn up a non-reducible property between a person at t_1 and a person at t_2 is an instance of the general failure of Reductionism and not a failure of personal identity per se:

> Personal identity is just that identity presupposed by the unity of the character which the unity of the narrative requires. (203 AV)

If **any** story can be told about a person between t^1 and t_2, 'linking birth to life to death' as it were, as long as that story conforms to the constraints within which a narrative can continue, this entails the sort of continuity we need to justify the imputation of strict identity.

It may be argued, that MacIntyre's position will blur the distinction between genuine guilt and guilt by association. This distinction is currently 'written in' the law and properly so. If we employed MacIntyre's criteria for personal identity in our courts, however, the following might occur. John murders someone at t_1 and Jack gets arrested for the crime at t_2. Although it is accepted by the court that Jack and John are **materially** different people, this 'fact' is irrelevent to the case. What is relevent in these matters is the exercise of expediency. Because John and Jack are both from the same area, have the same life goals or are both Canadian, Jack is sufficiently similar to John to be convicted of the crime which only John committed. The conditions of personal identity are, in effect, re-written in order to see John's victim avenged.

Is there anything in MacIntyre's theory thus far which will block this extremely counter-intuitive result? I believe that there is. Recall that according to MacIntyre's concept of narrative unity, each *enacted narrative maintains* its distinctiveness or separation from every other in virtue of its own unique combination of events and interconnected and embedded narratives. Despite their acknowledged similarities, if Jack's is indeed such a unique narrative, then the contexts or settings of which he has been a part will bear some substantive differences from John's.

If there are no such differences, then it would be required, on this view, to conclude that Jack is indeed John. But where there are such differences, one of the necessary conditions of narrative unity and of strict identity will not be met. Jack will not be **narratively continuous** with John and therefore cannot ever be subjectively accountable for John's actions **in the same way** that John is subjectively accountable for them.[8]

The second aspect of accountability is its objective aspect and it is correlative with the first. For not only must I be prepared to give an account of my own behavior, I must also be able to ask for similar accounts from others. Because our stories are what MacIntyre calls "interlocking sets of narratives"(203 AV), narratives which are not strictly our own, they nevertheless necessarily affect the way in which our own continue. In order for our own narratives to continue intelligibly, we must be in constant communication with and be able to make sense of the narratives of others. And as we have seen, we make sense of the narratives of other agents only when we can typify their particular actions in terms of the wider context of those agents' intentions, beliefs and settings.(s.'s 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 above)

MacIntyre senses the philosophical alarm which his argument to the enacted self might raise:

> It is important to notice that I am not arguing that the concepts of narrative unity or of intelligibility or of accountability are **more** fundamental than that of personal identity. The concepts of narrative, intelligibility and accountability presuppose the applicability of the concept of personal identity, just as it presupposes their applicability and just as indeed each of these three presupposes the applicability of the two others. The relationship is one of mutual pre-supposition. (203 AV)

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8. Jack may be subjectively accountable for John's crime as an accessory to it. Or he may be accountable for the same murder under the same charge. The point here is, that in any case, there will always be two persons and not one charged.

It is up from this host of interwoven foundational concepts, that the "subject" of the enacted narrative is able to stretch their understanding of their knowledge of themselves and "what more and what else the good life is for man".(204 AV)

MacIntyre's model of personal identity is that of a single character abstracted from its history. From the arguments that both unpredictability and teleology and both subjective and objective accountability are necessary features of that history, MacIntyre concludes that when we ignore any part of the mutually presuppositive model which he has constructed, our concept of personal identity and so any moral theory which is erected upon it "[is] bound to fail." (ibid.) Either we will fail to maintain a coherent account of human freedom or of human responsibility or one of personal meaning or some or all of the above. To fail in any of these respects is, for MacIntyre, to fail at exactly the tasks one has set for oneself as a moral philosopher.

Is it rationally justifiable to conceive of each life as a unity? Given MacIntyre's narrative account of practical rationality, an account that arises from MacIntyre's perception of "man-as-he-is", his dramatic theory of human action and his model of personal identity, the answer to this question is "yes" simply by definition. And in just what does this unity consist? Below, I consider MacIntyre's responses to this and two further questions and I consider his conclusion that the unity of a life resides in the asking and answering of them.

2.6 The Narrative Quest

To the question, "in what does the unity of a life consist?", MacIntyre answers that "its unity is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life."(203 AV) Further, when we ask "What is the good for me?"(ibid.), MacIntyre returns to the question of what a virtue is and responds that all and only those dispositions which enable me to live out that unity and "bring it to completion"(ibid.) comprise the good for me. Finally, to ask the larger question - "What is the good for man?"(ibid.), is to "ask what all the answers to the former question have in common."(ibid.) MacIntyre then reflects upon the asking itself of these questions and concludes that the "unity of a human life is the unity of a **narrative quest**"(ibid. my emphasis).

What is it that we are looking for? **The** good. How ought our search to proceed? MacIntyre answers us in three parts. Firstly, good is always but only partly determined in advance. Secondly, the experience itself of looking constitutes the form of the good. And finally, that experience is begun, maintained and preserved by the practice of the virtues.

The first thing which MacIntyre does in this discussion is remind the reader of the medieval notion of a **quest**. This notion has two features which are of interest to MacIntyre. They are that the object of one's search is 1) always partly but 2) never wholly determined in advance. Without some pre-definition of one's goal, "there could not be any beginning to a quest"(204 AV) and without the freedom to extend that pre-definition, there would be no point to the quest. MacIntyre says that:

> It is in looking for a conception of **the** good which will enable us to order other goods, for a conception of **the** good which will enable us to extend our understanding of the purpose and content of the virtues, for a conception of **the** good which will enable us to understand the place of integrity and constancy in life, that we initially define the kind of life which is **a quest for the good**. (204 AV my emphasis)

The second point which MacIntyre makes with respect to the notion of a quest per se follows from the first. In hunting for **the** good, man becomes the context in which various instances of the good are educed. He says that,

> ...a quest is always an education both as to the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge. (204 AV)

In a manner of speaking, the good **for** man is elicited from the good **of** man. The good of human beings is in their essence **qua** "story-telling animal". The good for them is the good of being, via this essence, "aspirers to truth". The stories of men (both the artifactual and the enacted kinds) are always at their best when those stories take seriously the questions of what is true and what is good. It is in this serious yet never sullen spirit alone that the truth or good is gradually 'brought out' and the narrative self brought out along with it.

For contemporary pilgrims, life's "mysteries" - so abundant in less 'enlightened' times - have been largely unravelled. But, as MacIntyre argued earlier, **Fortuna** promises that they can never be completely eradicated. The quest for the good therefore continues to be, in relevant part, what it has always been - "the herald's summons [when] the familiar life horizon has been outgrown; [when] the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time [when] the passing of a threshold is at hand."(51 HmF)[9]. Joseph Campbell refers to this process as the "call to adventure"(49 HmF) and MacIntyre would hardly disagree.

MacIntyre is now ready to begin the completion stage of his second definition of virtue. The third part of MacIntyre's answer to the question about the good which asks "how will we know when we've found it?", is that the "call to adventure" can only be taken up successfully by those who are prepared to heed it. Taking into account all that has gone on so far, what will this preparation consist in?

2.7 The Practice of Virtue

MacIntyre first defines virtue as follows:

> **...an acquired human ability the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods.** (178 AV) [emphasis in text]

We noted, it may be recalled, that this definition appeared to leave open the possibility that the content of any virtue might have to be determined emotively or, as J.B. Schneewind observed, "arbitrarily".(s.1.1 above) Has MacIntyre corrected this flaw? Following from his discussion of the narrative quest, his second stage definition of a virtue tells us that:

> The virtues are therefore to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain

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[9] Joseph Campbell, **The Hero with a Thousand Faces**, Bollingen Series XVII, Princeton University Press, 1949.

> us in the relevant kind of quest for the good by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge of the good. (204 AV)

What is new here when we compare it to the first definition? MacIntyre flags the addition "...not only...**but [also]**...".(my emphasis). We now know that in addition to the virtues being required for sustaining everyday practices, virtues must also sustain **enquiring, educative** - in short **philosophical** quests for the good. MacIntyre elaborates as follows:

> The catalogue of the virtues will therefore include the virtues required to sustain the kind of households and the kinds of communities in which men and women can seek for the good together and the virtues necessary for philosophical enquiry about the character of the good. (204 AV)

In practicing the virtues, we are all shielded from the disruptive and alienating effects of the harms, dangers and temptations which constantly threaten the unity of our enacted narratives - our ability to seek the good. The way that MacIntyre has set up that unity however, makes it clear that it will not be easily overturned. Narrative unity is not a rigid unity. Though secured within the constraints of the literary narrative, MacIntyre maintains that within those constraints, "anything can happen". The dismantling of narrative unity will require nothing less than the complete destruction of the narrative form per se and, MacIntyre argues, this simply cannot be done intentionally and successfully. Nevertheless, if narrative unity is overturned, then the question about **the** good for me cannot be answered. And when this question cannot be answered the question about **the** good for man, insofar as it involves what all the answers to the previous question have in common, begins to sound anachronistic at best - dangerous at worst. It falls upon the moral philosopher to find ways in which to extend our narratives without destroying them. In this role, MacIntyre offers what he calls a "provisional conclusion about the good life for man"(204 AV):

> ...the good life for man is the life spent in seeking the good life for man and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand **what more and what else the good life for man is.** (ibid. my emphasis)

Evil, like good, is not a metaphysical force for MacIntyre. It is rather the unavoidable and painful consequence of self-abnegation - of ignoring our uniquely human nature. "Man-as-he-is " is a story-telling animal, but one whose stories, at their best, aspire to the good.[10] Good is always but always only partly determined in advance. The pursuit of the good is always educative but it is impossible without the virtuous dispositions necessary to ensure the maintenance of that pursuit's and, **mutatis mutandis**, the pursuer's narrative unity.

What does MacIntyre's new definition of virtue have to say about how to proceed when the traditional practices in which one is engaged conflict with one another? To examine the nature of this question, MacIntyre proceeds to the third stage of his definition of virtue - the narrative nature of a moral tradition.

2.8 Moral Traditions

"What if I find myself confronted with a choice between two or more conflicting goods?" my modern self asks quite innocently. "And what if I am forced to conclude that no amount of "stretching" will ever cover the horns of my dilemma? How should I proceed?" Given the requirements of the self-enacted narrative as these are transposed upon MacIntyre's concept of a moral tradition, he will immediately note an overall problem in **me** which is not merely in my current circumstances.

MacIntyre's concept of a moral tradition follows as closely on the heels of his concept of the narrative self as this latter concept followed his narrative theory of action. MacIntyre believes that my practice of the virtues can only sustain my personal identity as long as the various settings and practices in which I am involved are accountable to each other. This, MacIntyre must commit himself to saying, can only be accomplished when all of those settings and practices can be included within the ambit of a single moral tradition. Since I claim to have found myself facing a choice between goods which cannot be reconciled, it follows that the settings and practices from which they respectively arise are necessarily separate - necessarily the elements of separate moral traditions. I am forced to the conclusion that I find myself in this predicament **because** I have failed to maintain the narrative unity of my life. Does it follow from this that narratively unified goods may not ever compete? On the contrary, MacIntyre says. Like the Darwinian evolution of a species,

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[10] In the text, MacIntyre uses the phrase "aspirers to **truth**"([m/e] 201 AV) rather than **good**. But I take these to be equivalent here.

> ...traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict. Indeed when a tradition becomes [stable] it is always dead or dying. (206 AV)

It follows that when competing goods are narratively unified, they will always be resolvable in "better or worse ways"(208 AV) rather than in one single way or in no way at all.[11] They will never all be reducible to some single non-reducible property nor will they contradict each other. And so seeing my impossible choice as one merely between this particular good and that particular good only forestalls the real choice which I must make. MacIntyre rejects as insensible the idea of a choice between irreconcilable goods within one tradition - to rule this out is just what it is to be recognized as **one** moral tradition. It is a sobering proposition, but in order to proceed in the face of this sort of dilemma, MacIntyre will say that I must choose between **ways of life** - that I must choose between **moral traditions.**

We have now seen, in brief, how MacIntyre's second stage definition of the virtues will respond to the questions of not so innocent moderns. Virtues, since their practice maintains the narrative unity of my life, are just what allow me to see what a "relevant kind of quest for the good" consists in, and they enable me to identify those areas in my life where I am not at my narratively unified best. MacIntyre concludes (in Chapter 16, "From the Virtues to Virtue to After Virtue") that,

> ...the virtues and the harms and evils which the virtues alone will overcome provide the structure both of a life in which the **telos** can be achieved and of a narrative in which the story of such a life can be unfolded. Once again it turns out that any specific account of the virtues presupposes an

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[11] I am offering here, what almost amounts to, an unforgivably abridged version of MacIntyre's argument to this effect. For its full force, see discussion pp.208-209 AV.

> equally specific account of the narrative structure and unity of life and vice versa. (226 AV)

Earlier, MacIntyre concluded that any coherent theory of moral agency is going to presuppose a narrative "all or nothing" theory of personal identity. We now see that, for MacIntyre, a narrative theory of personal identity necessarily presupposes the person's exclusive membership in a single moral tradition. Any specific account of moral agency is therefore going to presuppose a specific moral tradition. Without a single moral tradition to work in, the virtues cannot do their job and without the practice of the virtues, no moral tradition can do its job. Further, nothing in this claim goes against MacIntyre's earlier one that one's definition of virtue need not "recapitulate in any straightforward way" what has gone on so far in that tradition. Unity, for MacIntyre, always refers only to a tradition's core concepts and he argues that as long as those core concepts are retained, the face of a single tradition may, will and should change with time. Thus, one's traditional definition of virtue must always be kin to but need not and ought not be identical with the various definitions of virtue which one's tradition has produced in the past.

MacIntyre's discussion of moral traditions has, as a side effect of sorts, produced for us the notion of what a moral tradition in **disarray** might look like. To my mind, MacIntyre must commit himself to the view that such a 'tradition' will not look like anything at all - that is it will be unintelligible. Since single moral traditions, by definition, require that all the goods which one must choose between are commensurable, moral doctrines which promote the incommensurability of goods are necessarily excluded from the category of moral **tradition**. From this we can generate the conception of a philosophical tradition in similar disarray. The result being, that for MacIntyre, a philosophical tradition which treats paradigms of rationality, for example, as incommensurable, will be referring to itself as a 'tradition' in name only. To be in philosophical disorder is for a particular philosophical position to have lost its ties to its core concepts and for its adherents to have lost their philosophical sight. This, MacIntyre argues, is exactly what has happened in the case of liberal individualism. But liberal individualists insist that it is MacIntyre's vision which is impaired and not theirs.[12] I turn now to the consideration of MacIntyre's critics.

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[12] In "The Naturalistic Fallacy"(**Mind**, Vol.48, 1938, pp.466-477), I think that William Frankena states the conflict which I discern here between MacIntyre and the Liberal as one between what he refers to as the "definist" stance and the "intuitionist" stance. Frankena observes that the definist considers the intuitionist to be visually impaired because they do not see what is there and the intuitionist thinks the definist is visually impaired because because they see what is not there.(See discussion p.475)

Chapter Three

The Foreign Challenge

3.1. Introduction

If a philosophical tradition is in narrative disorder, it not only follows that its practitioners lack the requisite dispositions for philosophical enquiry. It follows also, that the theories of personal identity and moral agency which such a tradition generates will be in similar disarray. These, MacIntyre claims from the outset of **After Virtue**, are the problems which now beset the tradition of liberal individualism.

MacIntyre's external or foreign critics - that is critics who are identified as falling outside of the moral tradition which he is seeking to rehabilitate - range from those who deny the value of "the falsifying narrative" to those who deny the necessity of MacIntyre's communitarian solution to the production of a **modus vivendi**. His internal or native critics question the traditional integrity and so the philosophical viability of MacIntyre's non-metaphysical approach. In this and the next chapter, I examine challenges from both of these sources respectively in light of an underlying suspicion that they have failed to appreciate the scope and depth of MacIntyre's moral vision.

At the end of **After Virtue**, MacIntyre anticipates the various sources and character of objections to the argumentby which he seeks to recover the concept of virtue for contemporary moral philosophy. There are three positions from which he imagines those objections may be made. They are from the Liberal Individualist(LI) perspective, the Aristotelian/Thomistic natural law perspective and from the viewpoint of Marxism. I will not examine the Marxist challenge and concentrate instead on the first two types of criticism. MacIntyre distinguishes these two sorts of objections as follows:

> [There is] A motley party of defenders of liberal individualism...whose criticism of my central

> thesis rests chiefly or wholly upon a different and incompatible evaluation of the arguments...[e.g.] utilitarians, some Kantians, some proudly avowing the cause of liberal individualism as I have defined it...
>
> ...A second set of criticisms will certainly concern my interpretation of what I have called the Aristotelian or classical tradition...even if some large part of my interpretation could not withstand [this]criticism, the demonstration of this would itself strengthen the tradition which I am attempting to sustain and to extend. (242 AV)

MacIntyre is more interested in the latter than he is in the former type of criticism, but cautions that "[external] criticisms are no less important [than internal criticisms]; but they are important in a different way."(242 AV) MacIntyre does not expand on this comment but I believe, from everything that has gone on in his argument, that he might consider **foreign** objections important insofar as their putative inconsistencies and incoherencies would serve to underscore the disorder which he argues is endemic to the moral philosophy of modernity. **Native** criticism, on the other hand, is important for MacIntyre to the extent that it is aimed at fortifying the tradition which MacIntyre considers himself a part of - to the extent that it is aimed at **correcting** MacIntyre's exegetical errors and not calling into question his underlying assumptions.

The foreign challenge to MacIntyre's tradition comes, for the most part, from LI. To begin with, there are formal concerns with his overall argument. Like MacIntyre, LI rejects the metaphysical and epistemological foundations of traditional moral theories. But it claims that in pre-supposing **one** type of practical rationality, MacIntyre has re-introduced similar foundations, albeit under separate cover. In fact, arguing from a different set of premises, many liberals claim that we will only be able to "provide moral anchoring for personal autonomy, for the individual's right to choose his or her own way of life"(171 IWP)[1], when we regard that individual's behavior as separate from even its **own** context. Squarely against MacIntyre, LI argues that it is not only the case that there is no single correct conception of practical rationality, but also the case, given different conceptions of it, that we do not need to know how some particular person reasons in order to evaluate their behavior. **After Virtue**, on this view, goes too far because it seems to say that there are only two ways of reasoning - narratively or like an idiot. In spite of MacIntyre's rejection of traditional metaphysical and epistemological foundations, he is still much too **traditional** for contemporary liberal taste.

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[1] Etzioni, Amitai, "Toward an I & We Paradigm", **Contemporary Sociology**, Vol.18, 1989. Pp.171-175

Apart from this sort of formal concern with his argument, liberal individualists also have substantive problems with MacIntyre's dim view of modernity, his friendly view of Aristotle and his "radical" communitarianism. What is explicit in MacIntyre's general argument to the recovery of virtue ethics is that we will only avoid the painful alienating consequences of modernity - i.e., "the liquidation of the self"(191 AV) - if we adopt what amounts to MacIntyre's amended Aristotelian/Thomistic version of practical reasoning. This view asserts that the individual and social realization of good **must** presuppose that all human good 1) can only be found through participation in those communal practices which comprise the individual's historical setting, 2) is only and always emergent in the enacted narrative and 3) is, as a matter of course, spatially and temporally conveyed and extended via adaptive moral traditions. If either the scope or the weight of these claims is successfully challenged then it will fail to follow from his argument that MacIntyre's communitarian reclamation of virtue ethics is the **only** way of pursuing human good. If it is the case that there are other ways of pursuing goods and these alternatives continue to allow us to live in peace with each other, then yes, we may agree with MacIntyre when he says that we are not "waiting for Godot".(245 AV) But we may disagree with him when he says that we are waiting for "another - doubtless very different - St. Benedict".(ibid.) We may not have to "wait" for anyone at all since, in spite of the fact that we lack the unity implied in adherence to one moral tradition, we may have the means at hand to "go on".

LI claims to have provided the means to advance - i.e. the possibility of pluralistic community - by positing a particular distinction between the public realm and the private realm.[2] This distinction, for the most part, reserves the public realm for the pursuit of the good for all and the private realm for the pursuit of individual conceptions of the good life. On a liberal individualist account, MacIntyre's conclusion - that narrativism is **alone** in its capacity to educe **the** good for man - is illegitimately overstated and, perhaps even in a weakened version, ultimately false.

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[2] This distinction is cashed out in different ways according to the different writers, but generally speaking it confines the pursuit of special interest to the private realm and insists upon neutrality among various notions of the "good life" in the public domain. Even Aquinas makes the

The liberal critique of MacIntyre's conclusions also takes us towards the view that, with some adjustments, MacIntyre's project would be quite at home within the LI tradition.

> From what point of view is this book[3] written? ...from a Thomist stance, but one reached by the kind of intellectual reflection [MacIntyre] describes, not one expressing a commitment prior to exploring the alternatives. This is an achievement of individual reflection. We can also, of course, think of it as the product of particular historical contingencies, but if we do we are thinking of fragmented liberal modernity as, so to speak, a megatradition within which **all** traditions must, at least in the modern Western world, develop...["MacIntyre is a product of modernity like the rest of us"]. (404 MT)

On the basis of this dissent, liberals will want to claim that although MacIntyre's positive argument to narrative unity does not necessarily require them to reject it out of hand, it does fail to **compel** their rational allegiance.

According to this allegiance, MacIntyre's view is one possible conception of the good which an individual might choose to pursue in the private realm and one with respect to which public policy must remain neutral. But note the difficulty with this response. In their own terms, either there are singularly acceptable conceptions of the good or there are incommensurable conceptions of the good. The liberal denies the former and affirms the latter. Liberals are therefore **committed** to allowing the agent to exclusively pursue MacIntyrianism in the private realm and to insisting that such a pursuit may not extend into the public realm.

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distinction per se in "Against the Attackers of the Religious Life" 3.

[3] The speaker, Julia Annas, is referring to **WJWR**, but the question and the comments are equally if not more applicable to **After Virtue**.

Liberalism cannot favor particular conceptions of the good at the level of public policy. In the case of adopting MacIntyre's position, this would necessarily require the individual to ignore the distinction between the private and public realms which the liberal requires. The liberal would have to admit that they could not, in fact, allow positions like MacIntyre's to go through at all. With the proper changes, however, his position can be made amenable to the ethos of liberalism. One may ask what justifies this position, if not some view of what is singularly acceptable when it comes to the legitimacy of notions of the good. Isn't the liberal confused here?

MacIntyre would likely say that the mixed character of this response to his project is proof that that response arises out of a confused tradition. Yet clearly such a claim would instantly beg the question of what counts as being in "good order" in favor of that non-autonomistic view of practical rationality which the liberal summarily rejects. I will be taking this problem up in greater detail below.

The libertarian position taken against the logical necessity of MacIntyre's claims says that in order to have **any** concept of morality we need a concept of an autonomous moral agent. If there is no ground for individual autonomy in MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis, then it goes too far as it stands. In Chapter Four, we will see how established natural law theory's claim against the traditional integrity of MacIntyre's narrative unity says that, in order to have a **true** concept of morality, we need to show that "human reason can find criteria beyond individual experience and social conventions that would help ascertain real from apparent goods."(460 AM) According to the latter view, MacIntyre's formal moral foundationalism does not go far enough to merit natural law status. Both sorts of objection challenge the formal and substantive issues alike in **After Virtue**. Both positions seem to consider the problem in MacIntyre's thesis to be excessive formalism, though each sees this to involve an opposing set of difficulties.[4] Whether or not this thoroughgoing "squeeze play" bodes well or ill for MacIntyre's concept of narrative unity will emerge later on in my conclusions.

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[4] The liberal sees excessive formalism to be the fertile soil of tyranny. The traditional natural law theorist sees excessive formalism to be the fertile soil of anarchy.

3.2. The Disencumbered Self: Moral Autonomy or Moral Alienation ?

I turn now to a more detailed account of LI objections to MacIntyre's project. I begin with a review of MacIntyre's position in terms relative to the concerns of those objections. Although I consider MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis to be critically weak in certain areas (and I will discuss these in my concluding remarks), I will attempt to show here that foreign criticism of MacIntyre's thesis is not especially damaging to it. The reason for this failure is, I think, a lack of insight into the full import of MacIntyre's argument to narrative unity.

According to **After Virtue**, the good for man has to be understood in terms of the narrative unity of a whole human life, in terms which presuppose the existence and continuation of human practices within the ambit of a single moral tradition. On this view, human good (man's telos) cannot be educed unless it is true that this good is embedded from the start in human practices - practices which form a continuum from "birth to life to death". It might be argued that this claim about practices is not in keeping with the traditional Aristotelian conception. In MacIntyre's defense, I cite John Finnis. Finnis writes in **Natural Law and Natural Rights** that although Aristotle recognized that persons must be the **objects** of desirable states and benefits, it was also necessary that they be the **subjects** of these as well.

> [As per Aristotle] Human good requires not only that one **receive** and **experience** benefits or desirable states, it requires that one **do** certain things, that one should act with integrity and authenticity; if one can obtain the desirable objects and experiences through one's own action, so much the better. **Only in action (in the broad sense that includes the investigation and contemplation of the truth) does one fully participate in human goods**...one who is never more than a cog in big wheels turned by others is denied participation in one important aspect of human well-being. (146-47 NLNR my emphasis)

Clearly, if Finnis has gotten Aristotle correctly, it is Aristotle's view that the good for man as such must be available to individuals through their participation in communal practices and that their participation in those practices is as important as the practices themselves. Aristotle does not deny that the parameters for ordering goods may lie beyond the reach of the individual, beyond the scope of social or communal activities. But one need not buy into his metaphysics to agree with Aristotle that it is only **within** the activity afforded by this or that practice that the individual can hope to achieve their **telos.**[5] In order for human good to be gained from participating in this or that activity, it follows that that good must (at least) be **internal** to the practices which guide that activity.[6] This, it seems to me, is perfectly compatible with MacIntyre's view that a practice is,

> ...any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity[7] are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and **partially** definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence and human conceptions of ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (175 AV my emphasis)

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[5] Russell Hittinger, however, takes specific issue with this very sort of claim, saying that "it is not advisable to suppress the issues in a philosophy of nature and then as it were, take the ethics and run." (194 CNNLT)

[6] See Aristotle's **The Politics**, Book VII, Chapter 13 (5f) "Happiness and Leisure", (Porter, Jene ed.,_**Classics in Political Philosophy**, Prentice-Hall 1990, p.133) for what I take to be a reaffirmation of this view. I may be reading into it however and would argue, though not here, that, in any event, nothing Aristotle says appears to stand in opposition to what MacIntyre is claiming.

[7] MacIntyre describes the sort of good which is **internal** to a practice firstly by contrasting it to goods which are "contingent " or external to practices such as prestige or money. Then he says that "there are goods internal to the practice of chess which cannot be had in any way but by playing chess or some other game of that specific kind. We call them internal for two reasons:...first, ...we can only specify them...by means of examples from such games,...[second], they can only be identified and recognized by the experience of participating in the practice in question. Those who lack the relevant experience are incompetent thereby as judges of internal goods." (176 AV)

MacIntyre's view on what is necessary to theoretical and practical reasoning takes itself to be continuous with Aristotle, where:

> ...reason cannot be the slave of passions. For the education of the passions into conformity with the pursuit of what theoretical reasoning identifies as the **telos** and practical reasoning as the right action to do in each particular time and place is **what ethics is about.** [m/e] (152 AV)[8]

Since, according to MacIntyre, what is good for a human being can only be determined within the terms of an enacted narrative, we need to know just what sort of work the concept of narrative unity is doing in MacIntyre's concept of the good. If we are to take MacIntyre at his word, the concept in fact describes the **mythological** basis (qua "fundamental unity of the spiritual **history** [m/e]of mankind"(5 MG)) and ignores the **metaphysical** basis(qua fundamental unity of the spirituality of mankind per se) of the activity of practical reasoning. This activity guarantees that what one **does** will always be decided by or follow from what one reasons is best to do under the circumstances and that what one reasons is best to do under the circumstances will ultimately **educate** or guide one's passions and inclinations. "Best" here is expressed according to the inherited and shared criteria of intelligibility and accountability outlined earlier in Chapter 1 (s.1.6 above). These criteria in turn arise from, and so necessarily rely for their authenticity on understandings and ends held in common in a given community.

In **Patterns of Moral Complexity**[9], Charles Larmore, a contemporary liberal theorist, takes the charitable view that certain "Neo-Aristotelian tendencies" in communitarian moral philosophy ought to be encouraged by liberal individualists. Specifically, Larmore is interested in emphasizing the Aristotelian concept of how **phronesis** or practical judgement applies standing rules in the face of novel circumstances.[10] Yet he argues, under the heading of "The Limits of Neo-Aristotelianism", that MacIntyre's assessment of the value of Aristotelian tendencies is far too optimistic, even misdirected.

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[8] See MacIntyre's discussion of the practical syllogism. (151 AV) MacIntyre identifies three critical weaknesses in Aristotle's ethics. These are a) the metaphysical biology which is presupposed by his teleology, b) the close connection between the Ethics and the structure of the polis and c) the Platonic inheritance of the human soul/city-state analogy. He concludes that these weaknesses need not lead one to the conclusion that the entire Aristotelian practical reasoning ediface is by implication, equally compromised. For a supporting view of the connection between Aristotle's concept of practical reason and his notion of the good, see J. Finnis NLNR P.63 64 s.III.3 "Practical Principle and Participation in Value".

[9] Larmore, Charles, **Patterns of Moral Complexity**, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

> There is no doubt that from [Aristotle's] point of view a culture such as ours, which has largely accepted these complexities [those within the notions of good and right] must appear "rootless" and "fragmented". But in this case such terms show only the simplistic expectations with which one is approaching the subject. The terminology of wholes, parts and fragments is one which we ultimately inherit from Aristotle himself; but here as elsewhere, it proves not only unhelpful but positively misleading. (39 POMC)

Here, Larmore turns the philosophical strategy of **After Virtue** against its author. Larmore contends against MacIntyre, that a liberal individualist is **not** helpless when it comes to the project of accounting for (in MacIntyre's sense) normative claims at the theoretical level or various choices at the practical level of moral agency. Larmore argues throughout his book that this project **can** be accomplished without resort to moral monism, societal homogeneity and the like. Referring to the rationality of "contextualism" (29 PMC), he says that,

> for MacIntyre, the justification of a moral claim by appealing to various non-moral [i.e descriptive]facts and to other [unexamined]moral beliefs that we already hold and that are not, in this context, subject to question, amounts apparently to no justification at all. His master argument [recovery of virtue ethics] supposes that we can ensure the objectivity of moral belief, not if we simply justify it contextually by reference to others held constant, but only if all our moral beliefs can be justified **en masse**, only if we can show that **as a whole** they get us from untutored human nature to some extra-moral telos. So, in fact, MacIntyre's argument is epistemological foundationalism carried over to the realm of morality. (29 POMC)

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10. See Aristotle, **Nicomachean Ethics**, Bk VI, Ch.viii.

In spite of this objection, Larmore also claims that there are two features of MacIntyre's overall argument which might be seen to combine in support of rather than against the modern liberal vision of the good life which holds that "a life lived at its best will be differently but reasonably construed by different individuals and groups."(37 POMC) Those two features are firstly, MacIntyre's formal and "tentative" tautological conclusion that "the good life for man is the life spent in seeking the good life for man." (38 PMC), and secondly MacIntyre's praise for the tragedian Sophocles who had acknowledged precisely what Aristotle and Aquinas never had: "that the rational and good man will encounter irresolvable moral conflict".(38 PMC) Larmore hastily concludes from the combination of these two claims, that MacIntyre is tacitly committed to the possibility of equally legitimate yet diametrically opposed conceptions of good. We know from what MacIntyre has to say about the role of moral traditions and the possibility that there are better and worse ways of choosing between competing goods that this simply is not true.[11]

The actual definition of the good life which MacIntyre gives in his text does not end where Larmore ends it. Referring to it as his "provisional conclusion", MacIntyre continues, "...and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is."(204 AV) This is a significant omission on Larmore's part, in my opinion. For the trailer clearly suggests what MacIntyre actually has in mind, that in searching for the good, man proceeds in a particular direction, along a particular route but with no wholly predetermined conception of the good before him. Again, we notice the connection to MacIntyre's claim that all narratives continue within certain constraints, but that within those constraints, anything can happen. The logical necessity of any constraints at all here will always be unacceptable to the liberal individualist thinker; their omission equally unacceptable to MacIntyre.

Larmore's criticism of narrative unity, if it were explicit, would come down to the claim that MacIntyre needlessly underestimates the degree to which we find the **deviant** accountable. For there are many peculiar "stories" to be told by/to individuals and groups which, with some effort, are reasonably intelligible in MacIntyre's sense of the term. I speculate that something like this fact underwrites the idea that creativity in part consists in just this sort of **prima facie** unintelligibility. If MacIntyre thinks that the intelligibility/accountability condition of narrative unity imposes allegiance to a single moral tradition, he is, according to Larmore's analysis, simply wrong.

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[11] See pp.58-59 and f.10 in Chapter 2 above.

Larmore, however, is **overestimating** if not completely misrepresenting the degree to which MacIntyre is committed to the conventional. For MacIntyre, there are two criteria defining the good. Firstly, individuals or traditions are "alive" if and only if the goods they pursue are **extended and amended** throughout time. Secondly, goods can be extended and amended if and only if some conception of them is accepted in the first place. In comparing the second criterion to the first, Larmore concludes that MacIntyre's "hankering" after convention is just an unfortunate, arcane desire to conceal his own "deep-seated allegiance to modernity."(37 POMC)

There are at least two ways in which Larmore's argument fails. Firstly, I think that Larmore has confused two senses in which we might understand the term "conventional". On the one hand the term is often used to describe that which is conservative or rigid, unoriginal or trite. On the other, it is used to refer to the traditional or the methodical. If we appreciate the flexibilty with which MacIntyre's sense of the term "traditional" is endowed, his "conventionalism" comes across rather weakly. Yet, in spite of the range with which MacIntyre's putative conventionalism operates, he is not what Larmore wants him to be - that is a "pluralist malgre lui".(39 POMC). This is because that range is always circumscribed by a contingent of formal narrative constraints.

Secondly, and more broadly speaking, MacIntyre simply does not fit into **either** the pluralist **or** the monist mold. His difficulty with this distinction would be the same one he had with J.L. Austin's distinction between incommensurable goods and one single conception of the good. MacIntyre cites Austin as claiming that either there are rival incommensurable goods(pluralism) or there is one single conception of the good(monism).[12] There is no one single conception of the good(monism). Therefore goods are incommensurable (pluralism).

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[12] See discussion pp.208-209 AV.

MacIntyre agrees that there is no non-reducible property of the good for man(no monism). But to conclude from this that goods are incommensurable(pluralism) is to ignore the concept of narrative unity where "there are better and worse ways"(208 AV) of pursuing the good rather than one single way(monism) or many incommensurable ways(pluralism). MacIntyre's response constitutes a third category of ways in which goods may be pursued and Larmore's effort to force MacIntyre into the modern pluralist mold fails for want of noticing this. In one sense, Larmore is correct about his evaluation of MacIntyre's overall position. For MacIntyre surely would give up the sort of conventionalism which Larmore erroneously ascribes to him. But in overlooking the tenacity with which MacIntyre grips a "conventionalism" of a weaker sort, Larmore neglects to tackle MacIntyre's actual position.

In spite of this failure, Larmore's libertarian case for contextualism may still represent a legitimate alternative, and so a plausible challenge, to MacIntyre's confidence in the necessity of narrative unity for resolving modern moral chaos. If MacIntyre is claiming that the good can **only** be discovered in terms of the unity of practices, narratives and moral traditions, he may indeed have overstated his case. For the plausibility of contextualism would raise the prospect that MacIntyre, in the process of arriving at a stronger second stage definition of virtue, has failed to represent liberal individualism in its best light.

I will not go into the question of the philosophical admissibility of contextualism here, although this question would have to be pursued if I was after a stronger defense of MacIntyre's position. For now, I believe it is enough to point out that, in spite of giving no explicit mention of the sort of solution to social conflict implied by a libertarian contextual approach, MacIntyre still seems to believe that the "motley party of defenders of liberal individualism ...whose criticism of my central thesis rests chiefly or wholly upon a different and incompatible evaluation of the arguments...proudly [avows] the cause of liberal individualism **as I have defined it...**".(242 AV) In his defense, it may be true that contextualism or something very much like it is entailed in the description of LI which he does offer. But, again, this would only need to be looked at more carefully if a strong defense of MacIntyre's position was at stake.

According to the liberal individualism of Charles Larmore, MacIntyre's narrative unity **qua** monist thesis is unacceptably dogmatic - it needlessly and perilously conjoins individual moral judgement to community standards. The jist of that criticism is that if the commitment to monism which produces this result is dropped, narrative unity is the sort of concept that could be perfectly at home within what Larmore takes to be the liberal individualist tradition. But let us grant that MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis **does** include important individualist considerations which, if properly understood, would not necessitate the above result. **MacIntyre's** monism does not blur the distinction per se between individuals and communities, nor does it claim that there is no distinction. What it does claim is that as a moral community, we cannot rationally justify certain types of member behavior in some cases or "realms" and not in others **from within that community**. Human "cases" and "realms" - in virtue of their occurring within a single self-identified community - simply do not contain nor do they exhibit the degree of difference which would warrant such a radically individuated approach to their evaluation. What unifies such things - that is what they hold in common in virtue their arising from a single community - is what grounds their intelligibility. There is no possibility of MacIntyre's dropping the narrative non-atomistic component of his argument. To the extent that Larmore's offer to reclaim MacIntyre for modernity is equivalent to saying something like "if only narrative unity was entirely different, it would be contextualism", that offer is of little account.

Larmore believes that he has distinguished his account of liberal individualism while giving MacIntyre his due by recognizing the interdependent or social **side** of individual lives and incorporating this recognition into a liberal theory of practical rationality or contextualism. But this would not impress MacIntyre. Julia Annas, in commenting on **WJWR**, sees MacIntyre as saying that:

> ...one makes a transition from one intellectual position to another, not because of any knockdown argument (for each position can in its own terms cope with the other's arguments), but because one position can explain better than the other the nature of the disagreement and its own superiority in resolving it. (393 MT)

Annas goes on to argue against MacIntyre by questioning the degree to which such a claim involves the "superior" tradition in "beg[ging] the question in favor of its own claims".(ibid.) I will not take this specific problem up here. What is important in the present context is the argument which MacIntyre would give to ground his tradition's superiority against the liberal's. For the move to incorporate sociality into the liberal individualist concept of the self cannot resolve any of the difficulties which MacIntyre associates with that concept of the self. That argument to this conclusion would, I think, be as follows.

In the same way that the conception of an autonomous self was a response to the medieval teleological self, the recent efforts of liberal protagonists to introduce a social "side" to the individual must be seen as that tradition's effort to respond to a set of problems which have dogged the concept of radical autonomy. These problems involve the reconciliation of "human being to other human beings."(195 AV). The liberal answer in the latter case has been, for the most part, to procedurally append a public self to the self(now private) which necessarily precedes it. In so doing, all of the necessary conditions for liberal moral agency are preserved and the problem of the "we" is believed to be settled. But the definition of the autonomous self remains substantively unchanged. It still exists prior to all of its social roles. The liberal can argue that the influence of those social roles upon the self can still be felt in the public realm; still be dealt with there in much the same way that MacIntyre deals with it. But because the liberal bifurcated conception of the self does not allow the individual to occupy both domains at once, MacIntyre will argue that the problems of describing just **who** is being influenced in the public realm and **who** is occupying the private realm remain.

The problem of reconciling the "I" to the "We"(171 IWP) is no less a problem for MacIntyre. But in contrast to the liberal tradition, MacIntyre thinks that his re-working of the "all or nothing" concept of the self along the lines of narrative unity resolves both this difficulty and the difficulty of describing the moral agent. MacIntyre's definition of the self - **at the same time** both author and actor in its own enacted narrative and in the narratives of others respectively - accounts for both the unique **qua** individual nature of the person and their social nature.

Where a particular tradition finds itself better able than others to resolve a difficulty which has plagued it and those other traditions, it may justifiably claim rational superiority over them. So, in spite of Larmore's belief that his "thicker" notion of the liberal self 'knocks down' MacIntyre's objections against liberal individualism, those objections appear to remain standing. In what follows, the liberal conception of pluralistically principled moral traditions is pushed a little further.

In "Liberalism and the Communitarian Critique"[13] Robert Thigpen and Lyle Downing attempt to show that MacIntyre's "pure" communitarianism fails precisely because it does not recognize the value of "moral individualism". The putative purity of MacIntyre's view refers in relevant part to the definition which he gives of the self - one in which that self is necessarily encumbered and utterly unintelligible both to itself and to others without reference to those encumbrances. With respect to MacIntyre's narrative unity concept, the authors' criticisms suggest that in spite of the fact that someone's actions may have our fuller appreciation when we know something about their character and situation, it does not follow that those actions have nothing to say for themselves. It is the same for theories. William Frankena comments in his 1983 review of **After Virtue** that:

> I can know **that** an emotivist holds a certain view only by a kind of historical (biographical) inquiry, and I can understand or explain how he came to hold [it] only by a kind of historical investigation (biographical or otherwise). But I can, if I have the right conceptual equipment, understand **what** the view is without seeing it as the result of a historical development, and so far as I can see, I can also assess its status as true or false or rational to believe without seeing it as such an outcome. (580 M&MM)[14]

Indeed, it is argued by Thigpen and Downing that the only feature of actions, individuals, theories etc., that saves them from determinism, totalitarianism, and dogmatism respectively, just is the fact that they remain intelligible **out of context**. That present choices/behaviors need not be interminably co-opted by past ones - that this or that specific behavior need not absolutely accord with a given or even emergent pattern of behavior - is what guarantees individual freedom and, it might be argued, human survival. But, the authors go on to claim,

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[13] Thigpen, Robert B., and Downing, Lyle A., "Liberalism and the Communitarian Critique", **American Journal of Poltical Philosophy**, Vol.31, 1987, Part 2.

[14] Frankena, W. J., "MacIntyre and Modern Morality", **Ethics**, April 1983.

> MacIntyre repudiates this project. He **appears** to idealize societies in which persons were subordinate to the authority structure implicit in complex activities called practices.[15] (639 LCC my emphasis)

The liberal takes the view that social roles or practices are prescribed and MacIntyre clearly agrees with this. So theories where personal identity is **entirely** derived from and dependent on external prescriptions will clearly lack the grounds necessary for the attribution of the capacity for **self**-governance that is presumed in even MacIntyre's concept of moral agency. But in this, Thigpen and Downing believe that they are making an actual and useful distinction between the good for persons found in **taking on** social roles and the good for persons apart from those roles. As we have seen, MacIntyre clearly considers this sort of distinction insidious and alienating. What Thigpen and Downing argue is that MacIntyre simply cannot view the distinction in this way and do so **consistently**.

> MacIntyre fails to provide a theory of self which can account for a critical stance against society; he does not identify aspects of the self that transcend social roles. Although he favors debate about the meaning of tradition, we suggest that persons would not argue about meaning if their identities were entirely bound with their roles. Societies that protect dissent and argument about tradition do not assume that moral choices are **necessarily** dictated by role requirements. (643 LCC my emphasis)

The authors conclude that whereas liberal individualism ought to admit some "shared conception of the good", the communitarian position, in order to remain consistent, must "recognize that since actual communities are not necessarily created by people who act as responsible moral agents, societies with strong communal bonds must guard against the tyrannical imposition of dominant prejudices."(654 LCC) If Thigpen and Downing are right when they claim that MacIntyre's theory rejects the possibility of the self "standing against society", then the consequence for MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis is all too clear. Given the condition of "intelligibility" in MacIntyre's sense, where it is necessarily the case that the agent's choices and conclusions **qua** actions will always be tied to the views of others, those views themselves had better be completely reliable. And yet, as MacIntyre himself attests via his historical narrative, they frequently are not. MacIntyre cannot have it both ways.

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[15] See above fn.7

As we saw in Chapter 2 (above), MacIntyre does not reject the individual self per se but merely claims that the self apart from its history is "no self at all".(205 AV) What MacIntyre says is this:

> The contrast [between the liberal individualist self and the] narrative self is clear. For the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past - [to deny this] is to deform my present relationships. The possession of an individual identity and the possession of a social identity coincide. Notice that rebellion against my identity is always one possible mode of expressing it. (205 AV)

Clearly, it in no way follows from MacIntyre's view that individuals are required to "accept the moral limitations of the particularity of those forms of community."(ibid.) But he does insist that in the absence of such starting points and in subsequent inattention to them "there would never be anywhere to begin...[for] it is in moving forward from such particularity that the search for the good, for the universal, consists."(205 AV)

MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis, according to Thigpen and Downing, leaves "no room" for the possibility that what I do may in fact - despite its deviating from "what has gone on so far" - be the best thing to do under a given set of circumstances. What is key in this objection is this "circumstantial" feature of practical reasoning. MacIntyre's negative argument in the first part of **After Virtue** purported to demonstrate how changes in circumstances affect us in ways which most of us fail to note. As such, it seems crucial, even on MacIntyre's view, that despite their **apparent** unintelligibility and as long as there is no imminent danger, the actions etc., of individuals who are more sensitive to these changes ought to be allowed to go through. According to the liberal critique, there does not appear to be anything in MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis to save this conclusion. Thigpen and Downing surmise that this difficulty is evidence enough that MacIntyre cannot sustain his "pure" communitarianism - that any consistent moral theory has got to identify the self **qua** moral agent in at least partially individualistic terms.

In response, I feel that I have only to point to MacIntyre's thorough commitment to the notion of extending the good for man throughout time. The point which I take MacIntyre to be making with his insistence on the intelligibility of the narrative, is that these extensions must proceed in a gradual fashion if they are to truly build on goods which have already been achieved. Thus, the only position from which the individual may legitimately criticize or judge a practice is from the position of one who fully understands that practice and has already benefitted from it. In order that this be the case, it is necessary for the individual to have actually participated in all levels of a given practice's activity. MacIntyre, on these grounds, might instead have good reason to ask of the liberal individualist whether the radically disencumbered self is in any way better suited to the task of taking a "critical stance against society" than is the fully encumbered self which they reject. With reference to goods internal to practices, MacIntyre says that:

> ...they can only be identified and recognized by the experience of participating in the practice in question. Those who lack the relevant experience are incompetent thereby as judges of internal goods. (176 AV)

In conclusion, I cannot help but believe that my initial suspiscions about the degree to which MacIntyre's critics fail to appreciate the full scope of his arguments were correct. Despite what may be some legitimate objections to MacIntyre's view, the liberal individualist critique, to the extent that the positions expressed here are representative of it, falls far short of getting that view right. MacIntyre may indeed be guilty of representing liberal individualism in a weak or even its weakest light. But as my arguments here have shown, his critics are no less guilty on this account.

I continue in the next chapter with an examination of the second sort of criticism to MacIntyre's project - the criticism coming from contemporary natural law theory in the **traditional** genre.

Chapter Four

The Native Challenge

4.1 Introduction

I continue now with an examination of the second sort of objection to MacIntyre's project, the internal or native criticism coming from contemporary natural law theory in the **traditional** genre.

The native challenge to MacIntyre sees his "new" natural law theory to be so discontinuous with the "old" that it amounts to a completely different type of theory. MacIntyre would disagree strongly. Since I do not want to beg the question of who is right I begin with a working distinction only between traditional natural law theory[1] and "new" natural law theory.

Traditional natural law theory recommends belief in a system of laws or theory of human nature which sees its subjects worked towards certain pre-ordained ends. Traditional natural law theory of a bio-political sort is found in the works of Aristotle and then this sort is recovered for Christianity in the medieval period by Saint Thomas Aquinas. Medieval natural law theory supported Aristotle's metaphysical claim that, in order for human reason to be able to inform man correctly as to moral questions or to what actually **ought** to be, practical rationality must rely upon an objective order - by definition metaphysical or "not of its[reason's] own making". (449 AM)[2] Aristotle had not been particularly interested in whether or not such an order was "a gift of the gods"(IX.1 NE), whereas Aquinas had insisted that it must be.[3] Both sorts of theories required that everyone's desires and projects etc., be viewed **in toto** as a unity of purposes directed to culminate in a perfected human end-state.[4] That state is always and everywhere pre-determined via whatever "metaphysical scaffolding"(188 CNNLT)[5] a given instance of natural law theory enjoins. There are important differences between the classical and medieval versions of natural law morality, differences which MacIntyre himself notes are of some significance.[6] But I will, for the most part, deal with these two species of natural law as co-extensive insofar as they both incorporate a teleological naturalism based on their respective metaphysical foundations.

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[1] Included within the category of traditional natural law theories is both the bio-political naturalism of Aristotle and the theological naturalism of Aquinas. Although Aristotle's philosophy does not lend itself immediately to this category, I will take it that it does so indirectly via Thomistic interpretation.

Traditional and new natural law theorists agree that neither Aristotle's views on human nature nor the substantive teachings of Christianity can be included within any palatable moral foundation for today's consumer of moral theory.[7] Yet there appears to be some disagreement, notably on the part of Russell Hittinger, about just how far one may go in dealing with the problem of what might take the place of Aristotlelian or Thomistic metaphysics while maintaining one's traditional natural law integrity. New natural law theories profess to have succeeded in the project of finding acceptable replacements for the mistaken or undemonstrable principles of their forerunners. MacIntyre specifically purports to show that his concept of narrative unity is sufficiently universal and imposes sufficient unity to disarm Hittinger's suspicion that according to new natural law theory, practical reason is left with "only the order implicit in its own artifacts" for guidance. The problem, from Hittinger's point of view, is clear. Without what he considers to be the necessary "metaphysical scaffolding"(188 CNNLT) of an order **entirely** external to particular moral and epistemological deliberations, the objectivity and unity criteria of any natural law theory cannot be fulfilled.

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[2] Hittinger, Russell, "After MacIntyre: Natural Law Theory, Virtue Ethics, and Eudaimonia"[AM], **International Philosophical Quarterly**, Vol xxix no.4 issue no.116.

[3] Aquinas, St. Thomas, "Quolibetal Questions", VIII, 9,19. (cited in Bourke. Vernon J., **The Pocket Aquinas** [PA], Washington Square Press, 1960, p.191.)

[4] For Aristotle, "...happiness demands not only complete goodness, but a complete life"(IX.1 NE), and for Aquinas, "...the ultimate end of human beings must be one, because of the unity of human nature."("Exposition of Aristotle's Ethics" I, Lec.9, nn. 104-106. PA, p.190)

[5] Hittinger, Russell, **A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory**[CNNLT], Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press 1987.

[6] For example, MacIntyre notes that in allying itself with an Aristotelian view of knowledge, Thomism extended Aristotle's **scientia** of the physical order to the moral realm. MacIntyre observes: "But there is a problem for anyone holding this Aristotelian view of knowledge...For on Aristotle's own account the generalisations of politics and ethics are not such as would fit into a deductive acount. They hold not necessarily and universally, but only...for the most part. But if this is true, then we ought not to expect to be able to give, or want to be able to give, the kind of account of the virtues which Aquinas gives us." (167 AV) There are other differences as well. See p.163 AV.

[7] In the **Fundamentals of Ethics**[FE], (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1983), John Finnis notes parenthetically that

In order to be considered natural law per se, a moral theory must, by Hittinger's lights, include a rigorous appeal to some full blown theory of practical rationality which is compatible with an equally substantive theory of human nature and so Hittinger does not see the 'evils' of MacIntyre's conventionalism in the same light as the liberal individualist does. In referring to it as "a conventionalism with pre-modern credentials", Hittinger properly identifies MacIntyre's conventionalism in its weak or loose sense and therefore considers it to involve a set of difficulties which are opposed to the difficulties which liberals tend to see. What Hittinger appears to be arguing is that in the case of natural law, one's tradition must presuppose one's theories of practical rationality and human nature and not the other way around. MacIntyre's conception of a mutually presuppositive relationship between these elements seems, on Hittinger's account, to miss the point of a natural law theory of morality.

Insofar as MacIntyre's conception of practical rationality (as this is instantiated in his concept of narrative unity) relies on a context of shared or conventional (i.e. traditional) beliefs and practices, Hittinger may have a point when he denies that such a context can ever serve as a full-blown natural law theory of practical rationality. So in assessing Hittinger's complaint, we will have to keep in mind MacIntyre's argument

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"metaphysics is the last and most difficult, not the first and most **a priori**, of the achievements of reflective reasoning."(40 FE) to the conclusion that man is, **by nature**, "essentially a story-telling animal."(201 AV)

I will be focussing directly on two questions here. The first is, assuming that in order to call itself "natural law" a theory must meet certain minimum requirements, what might those be according to Hittinger? Reference to the works of "new" natural law theorist John Finnis and to remarks made by H.L.A. Hart will be made in an effort to place Hittinger's position in perspective. Secondly, why, according to Hittinger, does MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis fail to meet any such test and amount to nothing more than "another trope on conventions"?(198 CNNLT) In the end, I will argue that if MacIntyre's position does fail, it does not do so for the reasons Hittinger gives.

4.2 A Question of "Metaphysical Scaffolding"

According to the non-metaphysical teleology which MacIntyre holds to throughout **After Virtue**:

> ...if the conception of the good has to be expounded in terms of such actions as those of a practice, of the narrative unity of a human life and of a moral tradition, then goods and with them the only grounds for the authority of laws and virtues, can only be discovered by entering into those relationships which constitute communities whose central bond is a shared vision of and understanding of goods. To cut oneself off from shared activity in which one has initially to learn obediently as an apprentice learns, to isolate oneself from the communities which find their point and purpose in such activities, will be to debar oneself from finding any good outside of oneself. (240 AV)

For MacIntyre, the "good outside of oneself" is to be understood in an entirely literal fashion. That is that the good for man can only be found outside of **one** self. It does not, and indeed must not, follow from this (if we are to avoid the metaphysical errors of Aristotle and Aquinas) that that good only be discoverable outside of **all** selves. Shared activities or practices require the participation of persons in order to continue. In return, these activities provide the content of enacted narratives. Enacted narratives then provide the context in which various moral traditions are kept alive. The concept of the enacted narrative replaces the biblical narrative of Aquinas which had in its turn replaced the quaint metaphysical biology and outmoded political ideology of Aristotle.

MacIntyre believes that his concept of narrative unity is definitely up to the task of supplying a natural law framework for his recovery of virtue ethics. And so it follows from MacIntyre's updated natural law theory, that cutting one's good off from shared activity - either conceptually or actually - has the same consequences for the modern as cutting one's good off from political life had for the Athenian[8] and cutting one's good off from God had for the medieval. Philosophically, MacIntyre sees the eruption of the naturalistic fallacy in David Hume as, **mutatis mutandis** this sort of disengagement, albeit of norms from facts rather than selves from communities. Practically speaking, when the agent's good is disengaged in similar fashion from their community or what MacIntyre considers to be that good's true source, the agent is rendered utterly alien in every milieu it encounters. MacIntyre reminds us that:

> Hume indeed had something very like a nervous breakdown before he could come to terms with [the epistemological scheme of British empiricism]"(53 AV)

Russell Hittinger has no difficulty with MacIntyre's disposal of modern individualism.[9] He finds, however, that insofar as MacIntyre truly wants to consider himself part of an unbroken line from Aristotle through Aquinas to the present, the denial of a place to speculative reason (i.e. reason which derives from an order which "is not of its own making") is a striking omission. Hittinger believes that,

> MacIntyre's work represents the post-liberal turn in ethics. The outstanding question is whether it will be, as MacIntyre and others hope, a constructive post-liberalism - which is to say, an alternative to modern theories that does not become, when all is said and done, a siren call to make moral philosophy less rational

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[8] See Aristotle, **The Politics**, Book I, Chapter 2. (cited from **Classics in Political Philosophy** [CPP], Porter, Jene,ed., Prentice-Hall, 1989, p.91)

[9] Hittinger states: "Virtue ethicians and the proponents of the "new" natural law theory are correct in seeing that modern moral philosophy has exhausted itself in a series of dead-ends...". (461 AM)

> [i.e.objective] and hence more "edifying". (449 AM)

Hittinger's concern over whether or not MacIntyre's is a **real** natural law theory raises the important issue introduced earlier in Chapter 1 when we were considering the architectonic of **After Virtue**. That theoretical structuring implied that "the formal concept of virtue which MacIntyre is after will be kin to but not identical to that of any particular moral tradition which grows up around it." (s.1.1 above) I will assume that Hittinger, like MacIntyre, is not suggesting that natural law theory is awaiting the **resurrection** of Aquinas. Rather, I will take Hittinger to be arguing that MacIntyre's version of the natural law fails to be kin to Aquinas in any essential way.

It must be said at this point that Hittinger's philosophical agenda is primarily devoted to discovering whether or not what he considers to be the unique good of religion can be given any foundational status in a natural law theory. He thinks that given the "grand tradition"(189 CNNLT), there must be some account of such a place for religion if one's natural law theory is to be essentially natural **law**. Clearly, MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis does not require a **special** place for religion per se.[10] In **Critique of the New Natural Law Theory**, for instance, Hittinger confines himself to the significance of this specific "omission". But I think that there is a legitimate concern here which may be detatched from Hittinger's own philosophical agenda. The more general question of whether practical reason need or need not be directed by **any** order which is "not of its own making" will thus occupy my examination of Hittinger's criticisms.

Hittinger does not intend that his objections to **After Virtue** be read as "an exercise in extrinsic criticism of [MacIntyre's position]."(461 AM) Hittinger takes it as given that his own point of view is situated within the natural law tradition. He further accepts that MacIntyre's project is a candidate for natural law status, but wants to claim that it is a failed candidate. In order to justify its rejection, he has two jobs ahead of him. First he must establish a set of **necessary** conditions or qualifications for any natural law theory.[11] Second, Hittinger must show that MacIntyre's theory fails to meet them. If these conditions were merely sufficient, MacIntyre's failing to meet them would not be enough to justify his dismissal. For example, "god-like omnipotence" might be regarded as a merely sufficient condition for chairmanship of a university department. But any applicant's failure in this regard could not justifiably disqualify them from successful candidacy for the position unless there actually was an omnipotent competitor. On Hittinger's reckoning, there ought never to be this sort of edifying competitor for a natural law theory - never be a merely sufficient condition for natural law status. In order to work against MacIntyre's position, Hittinger's conditions must be necessary ones to natural law.

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[10] Narrative unity would, however, require that **if** religious practice was included in a given narrative that it be included in such a way so as to maintain the overall intelligibility of that narrative.

MacIntyre can hardly find fault with the form of Hittinger's argument - i.e. "your theory is not continuous with your tradition" - because MacIntyre uses this form himself throughout **After Virtue**. But, in order to show that Hittinger's dismissal of MacIntyre is unwarranted, we do not need to show that the conditions which Hittinger thinks are necessary to a natural law theory are not in fact. All that needs to be shown in MacIntyre's defense is that his position does exhibit a sufficient condition for successful natural law candidacy that natural law can live with. One of the frictions, therefore, between these two philosphers will occur where Hittinger's necessary and MacIntyre's sufficient conditions intersect.

Hittinger claims that "there is no way to recover natural law theory by way of shortcuts"(198 CNNLT). If I am right about the sense in which Hittinger rejects the viability of a merely sufficient resemblance to traditional natural law, then his native "wish to understand [new natural law theories] as theories which are in search of a theory of nature that would enable them to make good on their own insights"(461 AM) comes off sounding patronizing and hollow. The easiest way to resolve this difficulty will be to show that Hittinger is correct enough about the necessary conditions of a natural law theory, but that he is wrong to think that MacIntyre's concept of narrative unity cannot do the work of any theory which might meet them. I will be taking an Aristotelian line here, and assuming that broadly speaking, it is not the "rules" per se of a natural law theory that are at issue, but rather the ways in which those rules can be understood and applied that is causing friction between these two moral theorists.

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[11] Not an easy task on the best of days. Prof. MacKinnon of St. Mary's University in Halifax, N.S. opened his paper on natural law at the Learneds Conference '90 in Victoria, B.C. by noting that to his knowledge there were at least 72 definitions of natural law theory currently in circulation.

Hittinger is primarily interested in the natural dimension of the moral law concluding that:

> ...we should not be surprised if it turns out that we cannot have the results of a natural law theory of **morality** without avowing a theory of natural law. (449 AM)

His conclusion, nicely understated here, involves two related objections to MacIntyre's thesis - that based on the absence of one and the weakness of a second necessary condition, MacIntyre's theory fails to be a natural law theory. Hittinger's argument runs as follows. To begin with, traditional natural law theory will insist that, with respect to morality, one can only produce a really hard justification of reasons and behavior when one has "recourse to what was once called speculative reason: that is the relation of reason to an order which is not of its own making." This statement of the natural law position is an echo of Aquinas's definition from the **Summa Theologica** where "natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal [qua divine] law."(Question 91, Art.2 ST, 158-159 CPP). According to traditional natural law theory, referring to an ordering of goods which lies outside of their ordinary subjective experience is the only way in which the moral theorist or agent can be certain that the decision procedure or action they take is philosophically sound. Secondly, without such an order, it is unlikely that one's theory will be able to support the belief that the self is "more than the sum of its parts". Therefore, the new virtue ethics, if they are to remain in keeping with the epistemological and moral objectives of traditional natural law theory, must not retreat from the "issues of truth and falsity."(453 AM) Since objective truth is exactly the sort of result one expects from the application of a natural law epistemology, objective good is presumably the result one ought to be able to expect from the application of natural law morality.

Once, such an order was derived from Aristotle's "metaphysical biology". It gave the Athenian life what

Hittinger calls **ratio** (meaning) and **ordinatio** (direction).[12] A second such order was later derived from Christian revelation. It benefitted followers of Christ in a similar fashion. According to the claims of proponents of either sort of extrinsic order, the constraints imposed by such an order guaranteed completely reliable criteria of truth and goodness - provided the **telos** for man.

With the scientific overthrow of antiquarian theories of nature and the subsequent philosophical rejection of theistic teleology, Hittinger observes that "the very point of the virtues [i.e. to embody and exemplify what a human being truly ought to be] withers."(453 AM) Therefore, if natural law is to be enlisted by MacIntyre to support a reconstruction of virtue ethics, then his new natural law theory must do two things. It must deliver on the promise of certainty and objectivity while providing some means of withstanding the weight of modern criticism against traditional metaphysics. It must also give similarly plausible support to the unity of the self.

In the effort to render virtue ethics palatable for more practical philosophical tastes, new natural law theorists attempt to replace the atrophied metaphysical hierarchies of the ancients and the medievals with an order acceptably extrinsic to each self yet significantly less mysterious than Final Causes or the Trinity. According to Hittinger, however, what appears to take the place of the metaphysical frameworks of Aristotle and Aquinas in the various "recoverist" efforts to date bend too far towards meeting the demands of modernity to be able to claim any essential conformity with the demands of tradition. Hittinger cites reworkings of functionalism and narrative unity in this regard to which we can add John Finnis's "fascination with game theory".[13] Hittinger comments that,

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[12] "Granted that virtues, as moral qualities or properties, represent a certain **ratio** or intelligibility of moral agency, the question naturally arises whether there is an **ordinatio**, a non-arbitrary principle of order, which would allow us to assess how these virtues ought to fit together."(452 AM)

[13] I thank Professor Roger Shiner for pointing this addition out. Finnis uses the concept of a game in **Natural Law and Natural Rights** [NLNR](Finnis, John, **Natural Law and Natural Rights**, Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1980), concluding finally that the requirements of practical reason "gain practical force from the most basic explanation that can be

> ...virtue ethics...is so thoroughly immersed in the functional and narratival perspectives that we are unable to rise to a fully philosophical explication and justification of one or another morality as a concrete way of life. (454 AM)

On Hittinger's account, being able to rationally justify choices **within** one life, one community or one tradition does not compensate for MacIntyre's lack of attention when it comes to rationally justifying one **way** of life, one **kind** of community or one particular tradition over another. According to Hittinger's criticisms of MacIntyre's thesis, in failing to provide an account of practical reason which can "find guidance in something more than the order implicit in its own artifacts"(461 AM)[14], that thesis fails to give a natural law morality. At the end of his essay, ("After MacIntyre..."), Hittinger concludes:

> Natural law remains a road that is open, but one still not taken. (ibid.)

Is MacIntyre's post-liberal reconstruction of virtue ethics nothing more than what Hittinger concludes it is - i.e. "a half-way house that is stranded between a full-fledged natural law theory in the grand tradition and a thoroughly modern rejection of nature as having any constructive bearing upon ethics"?(189 CNNLT) Hittinger's objection here is addressed not only to MacIntyre but other "recoverist" moral philosophers and theologians as well[15].

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provided for them - that they are what is needed to participate in the game of God."(410 NLNR)

[14] Hittinger considers the following three questions to be ones which "any natural law theory [ought to be] designed to handle...1) Whether human goods (described as either values or virtues) are objective, which is to ask whether human reason can find criteria beyond individual experience and social conventions that would help to ascertain real from apparent goods. 2) Whether there is, in addition to a **ratio** of the goods, an **ordinatio** as well, so that we can make reasonable judgements regarding good and bad (and correlatively, better and best) orderings of the goods. 3) Whether the human person can be envisaged as a unity that is something more than the aggregate of values or virtues, so that we can speak in a philosophically intelligent and persuasive way about the good of man." (460 AM). These three questions, however, really collapse into the **ordinatio** condition mentioned in the text.

[15] For example: Edmund Pincoffs (**Quandries and Virtues:Against Reductivism in Ethics**, University of Kansas

And, as I noted above, he states quite clearly that it is not his **intention** merely to throw stones. In spite of these good intentions, however, can his critique be construed otherwise without its fully admitting MacIntyre into the coterie of natural law theorists in the grand tradition? I turn now to a more detailed examination these difficulties.

4.3 A Question of Human Nature

Hittinger remarks in the introduction to **A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory**, that the problem with all "new" natural law theories "lies in a failure to interrelate systematically practical reason with a philosophy of nature,...[natural law] obviously requires a commitment to law as 'natural' and nature as in some way normative...". (8 CNNLT) His case against **After Virtue** here is based on what he takes to be the necessary features of a full-fledged natural law theory. The first of these is the inclusion of a theory of human nature. How does Hittinger's position on this matter compare to other positions within the natural law tradition? To answer this question, I will look briefly at **The Concept of Law** (1961) by H.L.A. Hart and **Natural Law and Natural Rights** (1980) by John Finnis. I will then examine whether or not MacIntyre can meet this condition. To begin, what does a natural law theory of human nature involve for Russell Hittinger?

For Hittinger, the failure of new natural law theories "lies in a failure to interrelate systematically practical reason with a philosophy of nature."(8 CNNLT) With respect to his claim that MacIntyre fails to offer an adequate theory of nature and **a fortiori** of human nature, Hittinger has this to say:

> An account of man as he is, according to nature, is needed in order to know why the functionalist or teleological terms are truly perfective - indeed to know of what they are perfective in the first place. (455 AM)

Press, 1986), Stanley Hauerwas (**Character and the Christian Life**, Trinity University Press, 1975), Germaine Grisez (**Beyond the New Morality**, Notre Dame UNiversity Press, 1980), and John Finnis (**Fundamentals of Ethics**, Georgetown University Press, 1983).

How does Hittinger's view concerning the necessity of a theory of human nature to a natural law theory of morality compare to the views of other natural law theorists?

In **Natural Law and Natural Rights**, John Finnis takes issue with various erroneous but popular representations of natural law available especially in contemporary jurisprudential texts. Of particular note here is the difficulty Finnis has with views such as those of H.L.A. Hart. When Hart distinguishes natural law theory from legal positivism in **The Concept of Law**[16], he downplays the stagnant metaphysical aspects of the former in favor of preserving the sense in which for natural law:

> ...it is a truth of some importance that for the adequate description not only of law but of many other social institutions, a place must be reserved, besides [for] definitions and ordinary statements of fact, for a third category of statements; those the truth of which is contingent upon human beings and the world they live in retaining the salient characteristics which they have. (195 CL)

Apart from finding Hart's definition of natural law to be somewhat idiosyncratic[17], Finnis says that:

> It is simply not true that "any form of a natural law theory of morals entails the belief that propositions about man's duties and obligations can be inferred from propositions about his nature." (33 NLNR)

Finnis continues by showing that even Aquinas himself did not hold to the view that natural law principles could be inferred from any notion about what human beings needed **qua** human being to flourish - to achieve their **telos**.

> Aquinas considers that practical reasoning begins not by understanding this nature from the outside, as it were, by way of psychological, anthropological, or metaphysical observations and judgements defining human nature, but by experiencing one's nature, so to speak, from the

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[16] Hart, H.L.A., **The Concept of Law** [CL], Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961

[17] See Finnis's discussion under "The Variety of Human Opinions and Practices" P.29 NLNR.

> inside, in the form of one's inclinations. (34 NLNR)

Hittinger seems closer to Hart insofar as he also sees natural law as requiring a **preliminary** and separate account of human nature.

> ...if the virtues are perfections of human powers and capacities, we need to know of what the virtue is a perfection, and **then** we need to know the term of perfection - that is, the goal. In other words, it is not enough to give a goal of action and then count as virtuous whatever properties or qualities enable one to meet it. That is half the story. It pertains to the end term, or what MacIntyre refers to as "man as he might become." We will still need an account of "man as he is." Otherwise, the state of man will be regarded as so much raw, or merely provisional, "stuff." (455 AM)

Both MacIntyre and Finnis (and Aquinas) seem to be saying that a person's essential rational nature is inferred from the meaning and direction which their life actually manifests. Hittinger's specific complaint with this view will be that a theory of nature whose particulars are **constitutive of** rather than **derived from** the order to which they appeal for justification will fail to adequately distinguish that order from those particulars for the purpose of natural law. Does MacIntyre really fail in the sense that Hittinger thinks he does? To answer this question, I first return to Chapter 5 of **After Virtue** and MacIntyre's views on "Why the Enlightenment Project Had to Fail" where his initial discussion of human nature takes place.

In Chapter 5, MacIntyre draws a distinction between what he calls "untutored-human-nature-as-it-is"(52 AV) and the notion of **essential** human nature, a distinction which Hittinger apparently has failed to appreciate.[18] MacIntyre's distinction refers to the sense in which Enlightenment moral philosophy rejected the view that man has "an essence which defines his true end"(ibid.) in favor of the view that man may be "thought of as an individual prior to and apart from all roles".(56 AV) According to MacIntyre, it is this modern rejection of the notion of **essential** human nature which lands the Enlightenment in such an "impossible and quixotic" state when it comes to the matter of justifying various sets of moral injunctions inherited from its philosophical past.

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[18] MacIntyre does not refer directly to Aristotle in his discussion here but his comments do take place within the context of a comparison between an Aristotelian and an anti-Aristotelian ethos. It has been pointed out to me by Roger Shiner that Aristotle, in fact, makes a similar if not the same distinction between "natural virtue" and "virtue proper".(XIII.6 NE)

The concept of **essential** human nature differs from the concept of **untutored** human nature insofar as it is a teleological concept of human nature which incorporates notions of function and purpose. It is the essential concept of human nature alone, MacIntyre insists, which has any relevence to moral enquiry. In this, he takes himself to stand by Aristotle and the classical tradition which forms the backdrop to Aristotle's metaphysical biology. MacIntyre claims that according to that tradition:

> ..."man" stands to "good man" as "watch" stands to "good watch"...to be a man is to fill a set of roles each of which has its own point and purpose: member of a family, citizen, soldier, philosopher, servant of God. (57 AV)

When we get to MacIntyre's emergent "central thesis" in Chapter 15 - i.e. that "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story telling animal"(201 AV), we have gotten to a concept of human nature which MacIntyre considers sufficient for his moral theory. If Hittinger is suggesting that MacIntyre has not given an account of "essential" human nature, then he is mistaken. If Hittinger is suggesting that MacIntyre needs to include with such an account, a **description** of "untutored-human-nature-as-it-is", he is really asking for the sort of information which is irrelevant to natural law moral theory. However, Hittinger may be merely suggesting that although MacIntyre's account of man's essential nature is not false according to natural law, it really is not **substantive enough for** or **substantively enough like** natural law to be continuous with it.

In defending himself against the first part of this last objection, MacIntyre can begin by arguing that his hypotheses about narrative reasoning and intelligibility are, in any event, empirically testable. Secondly, I think that MacIntyre will want to say that apart from the generalisations which such testing might produce, any more **substance** to his account of human nature would rob his theory of narrative unity of its ability to account for human freedom.[19]

With respect to the second part of the objection, MacIntyre would point out, as he does in his text, that all was not well at the substantive level for the grand tradition of natural law; "medieval culture, insofar as it was a unity at all, was a fragile and complex balance of a variety of disparate and conflicting elements."(155 AV) Which of these substantive strains ought he to replicate? If MacIntyre's theory of human nature is not substantively identifiable with any of those strains, it is because MacIntyre does not consider the force of the natural law **tradition** to come from its substantive considerations. He considers, rather, that its force lies directly in the **form** of, for example, Aquinas's engagement with Aristotle:

> ...[the] tradition is not easy to name, [but] it is not too difficult to recognize. After Aristotle, it always uses the **Nichomachean Ethics** and the **Politics** as key texts, when it can, but it never surrenders itself wholly to Aristotle. For it is a tradition which always sets itself in a relationship of dialogue with Aristotle, rather than in any relationship of simple assent. (154 AV)

It appears to follow from Hittinger's general conclusions about new natural law theories that it is a true concept of **untutored** and not essential human nature which traditional natural law theory lacks and is currently in search of. Yet, as Hittinger notes above, this concept will have to avoid the conclusion that man is by nature "so much raw, provisional stuff". According to Hittinger's understanding of natural law theory so far as I see it, a new natural law theory must, like its predecessors, provide a pre-theoretical account of human nature but one which, also like its predecessors, may purport to avoid being pre-theoretical. This confusion, MacIntyre will argue, is precisely what needs to be eliminated from natural law theory if it is to survive modernity. In effect, MacIntyre eliminates it by showing that the very concept of pre-theoreticity is an unintelligible one.

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[19] With respect to the empirical testability of narrative unity, I suppose MacIntyre could get support for the weight of his claims from the results of psychological experiments designed to test the bottom line for intelligibility so to speak. He might also want to refer to the findings of social anthropologists to support the scope of his claims. With respect to the second point, see Chapter 2, s.2.2 above. The point is made there somewhat differently, but nevertheless consists in something like the platitudinous claim that with respect to the demand for human freedom, "more is always less".

I submit that Hittinger's need for a pre-theoretical account of human nature could indeed be satisfied by an account of a narrative objective order to which reason may appeal for reliable guidance.[20] On this submission and to the extent that MacIntyre considers the former need unintelligible, he is left only to show that his concept of narrative unity exhibits the satisfying condition of objectivity to pass the candidacy exam for natural law status. Finally, we know - from what has gone on so far - that MacIntyre considers the intelligibility and legitimacy of any such objective order to depend on **its intimacy with** rather than on **its separation from** a subjective order. To this extent, he believes that he has shown that narrative unity **can** do the work which Hittinger and natural law theory traditionally - but erroneously - suppose a pre-theoretical account of human nature alone can do.

Next at stake for MacIntyre is what Hittinger considers to be the question of the unity of the self.

4.4 A Question of Self-Unity

Traditional natural law theory posited one of either a bio-political or a theological metaphysical foundation which acted as the unifying source of a plurality of ends towards which persons, with their multifarious desires and inclinations, were nevertheless designed to advance. These "ends" were inclusive as opposed to dominant[21] and represented the self in its perfected state. The entire teleological process implied that each self was created as a particular **potentia** - more than a mere aggregate of its parts. Hittinger contrasts the classical inclusive ends model with the **modern** one:

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[20] I confess that if my 'spirited' defense of MacIntyre is vulnerable, it is on precisely this point.

[21] The terms "inclusive" and "dominant" refer in the text to two types of ends or goods for man. Dominant end models, where a single end is selected and pursued to the exclusion of all others (e.g. **courage** for Spartans) are rejected by thinkers with more 'catholic' tastes. Such thinkers, however, divide on the sort of inclusive ends model they prefer. For example, Hittinger says that John Rawls claims that the aims of human beings are heterogeneous and respecting human beings as they are requires operating from

> Modern theorists reject [dominant end models] because, as John Rawls has put it, the aims of the human self are "heterogeneous"[no reference]. A dominant end, therefore is not adequate for practical reasons because it suffocates what is most distinctive about a human self - namely the pluralism and heterogeneity of its desires, interests, and goals. But ancient and medieval theorists rejected the dominant end model for precisely the opposite reason. (456 AM)

The distinction I take Hittinger to be noting here is the one between a modern **open** concept of "inclusive" and a traditional **closed** concept of it respectively. Hittinger denies that any one moral theory can accomodate the tension between these two conceptions of the unity of the self. Can MacIntyre show Hittinger that narrative unity can succeed at this 'Herculean' task?

Hittinger correctly allows that MacIntyre sees the need to conceive of the self as more than the sum of its parts.[22] But he claims that narrative unity fails to account for this unified self to the extent that it must if narrative unity is to be a safe replacement for the older "metaphysical scaffolding" of natural law theory. In spite of the substantive differences between the self's parts - human desires etc. - they must all be of one and the same type. But Hittinger considers the open-endedness of narrative

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an inclusive ends model. On the other hand, Aquinas claims that it is "the unity of the human self" which defeats the concept of a dominant end model. This difference, Hittinger observes, points directly to the question of whether it is the unified or disunified nature of human aims which ought to determine the substance of man'e ends. MacIntyre agrees with Hittinger that the disunified concept of the self and its aims is unworkable. But, if it is to be the former, as natural law argues, Hittinger asks MacIntyre whether the narrative form is "a satisfactory account of that unity".(455 AM)

[22] MacIntyre says, "That particular actions derive their character as parts of larger wholes...is necessary at least to consider if we are to begin to understand how a life may be more than a series of episodes." (190 AV)

unity to be not only inadequate to the task of founding such a closed conception of inclusive ends but even detrimental to it. Is Hittinger correct in this indictment of narrative unity?

From our inspection of narrative unity in Chapters 1 and 2, we can focus directly on Hittinger's key difficulty. It will be that the unity of the self which the concept of a narrative attempts to sustain is a **self**-generating or open one rather than a pre-determined or closed one. Arguing that in order to be continuous with traditional natural law theory, MacIntyre must come down on the side of Aquinas, Hittinger purports to offer further support for his conclusion that MacIntyre's theory is, in fact, just another "trope on conventions".

But MacIntyre's concept of unity is neither "open" in the Rawlsian sense nor is it "closed" in the Thomistic sense. MacIntyre's position is distinguished from Rawls's insofar as even a self-generating or "open" unity must presume the self to begin with **some** notion of what its unity consists in. Such a notion is provided by the starting points into which the individual is "born" and if it is not assumed, the self cannot avoid the problems encountered by, for example, the **ex nihilo** self of existentialism. What then distinguishes MacIntyre's unified self from the pre-determined or closed self of Aquinas?

What distinguishes MacIntyre from Aquinas(at least Hittinger's Aquinas) rests chiefly on their different views about the nature of an external order. The pre-determined self of Aquinas presumes that the source of its unified image exists prior to the existence of **all** selves - in God's eye for instance. MacIntyre wants to say that the source of the self's unity, that is the source of the image which the self begins with, is the **tradition** into which it is born. And so although found outside of a particular self, it is not the case that this image is found outside of all selves. MacIntyre's unified image of the self is therefore "open" to innovation, extension etc., and not 'written in stone' as it were. But since the source and maintainer of this image is, for MacIntyre, necessarily **a single intelligible moral tradition** and since such a tradition precludes the possibility of desiring incommensurable goods, MacIntyre may claim that narrative unity does, in fact, support the natural law requirement that those desires will be of one type only. Narrative unity, therefore, contains all that is needed to generate a unified image of the self.

To be sure, MacIntyre says nothing here about the very first image a self ever had of itself; what it might have consisted in or from which "tradition" it might have come. And this, it seems to me, will be the only plausible basis to Hittinger's complaints. But to answer these sorts of questions, MacIntyre will have to enter into rank speculation; something which he is not prepared to do given the exigencies of his particular philosophical setting. Whether or not such questions **need** to be answered by a contemporary natural law theory of practical rationality - indeed by any moral theory - is a matter of considerable importance but one which must go unsettled here. I promise, however, to return to the matter in my final conclusions.

For MacIntyre, narrative unity presupposes exactly the right sort of unity necessary to give his theory of the self all the architectural support it needs without reaching into the domain of speculative reason. For MacIntyre complains that:

> When men and women identify what are in fact their partial and particular causes too easily and too completely with the cause of some universal principle, they usually behave worse than they otherwise would. (206 AV)

In refusing to provide the substantive terms of the content of man's ends - the substantive terms of the "good" for man - MacIntyre is accused of resting in a certain sort of Rawlsian conventionalism. Hittinger cautions that:

> Any effort to extract a part of the ethic in the absence of its proper foundations, or to assign that part to some other foundation, is tantamount to constructing a materially different ethic. (195 CNNLT)

As I have argued, however, MacIntyre can resist the comparison to Rawls. Does resisting comparison to Aquinas as well leave Hittinger's case against MacIntyre open? In order to close it, all that needs to be shown is that in order to qualify as a natural law theorist, one does not have to go outside of the **chronicle** of man's spiritual history to answer what are typically regarded by such theorists as the really big questions in philosophy (e.g what are we? how did we get here? why are we here?). Neither Hittinger nor MacIntyre are atypical natural law theorists in this respect. But they clearly divide when it comes to what it takes to answer these questions.

If we go with traditional natural law theory according to Hittinger, we must give up the possibility that there can be any non-metaphysical foundations to moral goodness. If we go with new natural law theory, we need only give up the necessary **priority** of our metaphysical beliefs to our theories of practical rationality. MacIntyre says that "we have every reason to reject...the part of Christian theology which concerns man's true end, [the part which] is on Aquinas's own account a matter of faith, not of reason."(167 AV) MacIntyre's new natural law theory is therefore more competitive in the contemporary moral theory market than traditional natural law theory is.

Nothing in MacIntyre's position **excludes** the possibility that God did, at some point, bring a notion of the good for man into existence, a notion which is subsequently clarified in an act of revelation. In fact, if pushed to its limit, MacIntyre's argument appears to require a move very similar to something like this. What is really at issue between Hittinger and MacIntyre is, therefore, the **manner** in which objective good is revealed and not its objectivity per se. The current competitiveness of the concept of narrative unity together with its fidelity to the idea of "a rationally and morally defensible standpoint from which to judge and act - and in terms of which to evaluate rival and heterogeneous moral schemes which compete for our allegiance"(viii AV) show that MacIntyre's "natural law theory" extends the reach of natural law theory per se without overturning its most basic principles.

It is clear that MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis differs in many respects from the metaphysical teleologies of Aristotle and Aquinas. However, it is also clear that MacIntyre's foundationalism **is** related to these telelogies in an essential way. Hittinger has failed to demonstrate his claim that MacIntyre has not brought us further up the road of natural law.

In conclusion, to the extent that human reason can only **discover** its parameters by "gazing upon" its products - in the form of traditions for example - it is true that in this sense human reason is restricted to finding practical guidance in "its own artifacts". But to the extent that the parameters of human reason are not created **ex nihilo** by individual human reason - and MacIntyre implicitly argues this throughout **After Virtue** - it is also true that it finds guidance in an order "not of its own making". Just who or what is ultimately responsible for the origin of those parameters is not at issue in **After Virtue** and nor does it become an issue in MacIntyre's later work **Whose Justice? Which Rationality?** One can only conclude that as far as MacIntyre is concerned in these works, it is not an issue at all.

MacIntyre does not **neglect** to provide the concrete terms of the good for man. He argues instead that, according to the medieval notion of the **quest**,

> ...it is only in the course of the quest and only through encountering and coping with the various particular harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which provide any quest with its episodes and incidents that the goal of the quest is finally to be understood. (204 AV)

As we noted from our examination of this culmination to MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis in Chapter Two (s.2.13 above), the 'good' is to be always partly but never wholly determined in advance. Since the aims of moral philosophy are understood by MacIntyre to be primarily **educative**, the value of the good can only be appreciated and retained by moral judgement if it is learned in such a way so as to promote that judgement's ability to maneuver defensibly in practical and so novel situations. To this extent, MacIntyre's thesis is in sufficient keeping with traditional natural law theory to call itself a proper bearer of that tradition. The **prima facie** distinction between new and old natural law theory which I posited at the beginning of my discussion of MacIntyre's native challenge is, in the end, the only sort of distinction which will hold between these two species of natural law theory per se.

Conclusion

Before offering my concluding remarks, I would like to briefly review MacIntyre's position on narrative unity and the recovery of virtue.

Alasdair MacIntyre submits in **After Virtue** that the necessary unity of the enacted narrative "provides the virtues with an adequate telos"(190 AV) - an adequate purpose or function. That purpose or function is to act as the dispositional "glue" which causes all of our settings, beliefs, intentions, actions, and goals to adhere to each other from moment to moment. Given content, the variables in this cohesive process both presuppose and themselves imply a distinct and unique personal identity for each of its subscribers. The entire process in turn, mutually presupposes a complex narrative model in which our own individual histories are either interconnected with or embedded in the histories of others.

The project of describing settings, beliefs, intentions, actions, goals or even personal identity itself in atomistic terms will be a useful one if and only if such "items" are entirely vulnerable to scientific scrutiny. MacIntyre does not believe that they are and so the scientific project of describing these "items" is misdirected. However, if the enquirer is prepared to acknowledge that any and all results arising from the more general study of settings and beliefs and so on, cannot bear the weight of descriptive claims - that is, if the enquirer is prepared to acknowledge the results as mere generalizations - then the project of estimating the nature of these "items" need not fall afoul of MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis.

Behind MacIntyre's criticism of positivistic moral philosophy is his view that the job of the moral philosopher is to educate or suggest norms rather than to reduce or describe 'facts'. As long as the work of studying human behavior is purely estimative, the humanities and social "sciences" (e.g. sociology, anthropology and so on) can continue to have a place in the moral philosopher's lexicon of background theories. This view clearly distinguishes MacIntyre's moral philosophy from both Rationalist and Empiricist moral philosophy and especially distinguishes him from the moral philosophy of the contemporary liberal individualist. To the extent that MacIntyre's position supports all and only what is central to the natural law tradition, he clearly stands within the ranks of philosophers such as Aristotle and Aquinas. MacIntyre claims that "in any given situation the relationship between me, my social identity, and my good may and characteristically will preclude viewing what is central to my tradition as matter for re-evaluation."(664 IGR)[1] If natural law can tolerate the narrow scope but intense weight of MacIntyre's commitment to the Thomistic tradition and accept that he has established his own agreement to what is "central" in that tradition, then natural law theory must accept that the question of how well MacIntyre blends in at its periphery is not one which need trouble it a great deal.

At the beginning of his discussion in Chapter 15, MacIntyre acknowledged two sorts of objections which might be made against his concept of narrative unity. One, a sociological objection, just makes the point that we really do view lives in terms of its segments. We distinguish between the exigencies of the old and those of the young, between the realm of the private and that of the public or between the practices of leisure and the practices of work. The second objection would be philosophical. For it would be argued, at one's Cartesian best, that in order to get at the truth of things, it is always necessary to first engage in breaking down the complex into the simple.

These sorts of objections on their own, however, do not refute MacIntyre's narrative unity thesis. For nothing in them calls into question that behind the segments, beneath the complexity, might be a narrative order which is presupposed in the very act of describing what it is to be young or old, to operate in the private or the public domain, or what light and heat are or how I know what I know. This order, however, need not be construed in metaphysical terms, in terms implicative of some cosmic regime. Indeed, if the tradition of which this order is a part is to remain alive, this order may and indeed must,

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[1] MacIntyre, Alasdair, "Intelligibility, Goods and Rules"[IGR], (response to Schneewind), **Journal of Philosophy**, Vol.LXXIX, No.11, November 1982, pp.663-664.

MacIntyre argues, be construed along the lines of narrative unity which he has drawn for us in **After Virtue**.

In recognizing the need for a concept of the self "whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end"(191 AV), MacIntyre reworks an old philosophical idea - the value of a virtuous life - on a new theme - the recognition of the mythic structures of the narrative. The mythic structure of the narrative provides the ongoing ground of human community. This, in its turn, provides the "safe house" from which the self-assured and virtuous enquirer must emerge in the quest for the "what else and the what more" of the good for man.

In spite of what I have taken to be their lack of appreciation for MacIntyre's concept of narrative unity, some of the concerns which his critics raise seem to me, when most is said and done, to be legitimate though not precisely for the reasons they offer. One concern which I am left with can be seen to bother both MacIntyre's foreign and native critics, though each of these states this concern in a different way.

The liberal individualist is concerned to offer an account of the self which does not rely on the **a priori** positing of community. For in relying on this, the liberal argues, we rob the individual of the grounds for self-governance, we make it impossible for the individual to take a "stance against society". The natural law theorist, **pace** Hittinger, is also concerned with MacIntyre's choice of "starting point." This view argues that human reason cannot be left with the task of finding guidance "only in the order implicit in its own artifacts." Hittinger claims that the only way to overcome this difficulty according to a truly natural law approach is to begin by coming up with the real metaphysical goods so to speak.

If a person requires a community setting from which to launch their own enacted narrative, then what sorts of entities made up the first community? If intelligibility is contingent upon "shared understandings", how did understandings get shared in the first place? Hittinger's answer will be, I think, that human beings were created as rational beings with the idea of "community" already in place, and so he will see the question of which came first as a metaphysical rather than a practical one. Liberals consider these questions entirely in practical terms where it is clear that the one precedes the many, and that at the outset, successful communication must have largely been a matter of coincidence.

Having rejected the coherence of the liberal approach, MacIntyre does not want to have to appeal to metaphysics in order to explain the origin of narrative unity. But instead of merely rejecting these particular origins, MacIntyre instead appears to reject the importance of pre-narrative origins per se. In other words, MacIntyre shifts the "starting point" of human traditions from God or some like source, to the "story" of God as it were. In beginning at this point, the question of how particular individuals first "got God" (or a sense of community) is absorbed into the terms of the history of one's particular tradition. For example, Saul the Roman tax collector is riding along the road to Damascus one afternoon on his way to some routine extortion when he is struck by a blinding flash of light. The light is God, as we know, because this is the way God tends to make his presence felt on earth. The light speaks directly to Saul and tells him that he must give up his wicked ways and become a soldier of Christ. Saul becomes Paul; the conversion is a done deal.

MacIntyre does not seem to be interested in what actually happened that day on the road to Damascus. In fact, he believes that no one on earth can ever know this. **Fortuna** just raised her "bitch-goddess"-like head and the history of the Greeks was changed forever. Presumably though, Paul's conversion is an event and not merely a story. And I, for one, want to know what actually happened and if the story as it is told is what actually happened, then I want to know this. Like MacIntyre's modern emotivist individual, I find myself without the sort of "starting point" which he considers necessary to getting one's enacted narrative off the ground. The reason why I need to know what really happened to Paul is that the terms in which Paul's story is told are no longer my terms, are no longer intelligible to me.

My own "roots" are useless as translators here insofar as they are dead and dying and long confounded with the claims of modernity. So, like many of my contemporaries, I too need to "see" the event in order to begin to understand what happened to Paul. But, says MacIntyre, simply viewing the event will tell me nothing about it that I do not already know - man is riding along on horse, man falls off horse, man starts to call himself a "Christian". In preventing me and others like me from getting at the "truth", MacIntyre has, in effect, written off most of those who are in the most need of meaning and direction in their lives. In choosing to forego an account of the pre-narrative origins of human reason and human community, he has neglected to give an account of how outsiders - and we are outsiders by his reckoning - ought to begin the narrative quest. To the foreigner, his optimism in the face of this "crisis" is understandably stunning. But it appears to based on the confidence he has that among the walking dead are itinerant "men and women of good will"(244 AV) who need only succeed in recognizing one another for what they are - the hope of mankind - in order that the quest for the good be restarted. Perhaps MacIntyre sees himself as one of these. His optimism suggests as much.

In the end, MacIntyre seems to be arguing that as long as a particular tradition exhibits all of the qualities of a tradition in "good order", it is a suitable "starting point" from which to begin the quest for the good. But, according to MacIntyre, we currently have only one tradition which meets this test. Therefore, only those who adopt that tradition (or perhaps only those whom that tradition adopts!) can hope to achieve real narrative unity in their lives. Another option - develop another tradition which will meet the test - seems impossible if we agree with MacIntyre that the ones doing the developing are themselves in various stages of acute narrative failure. If, as the liberal individualist critique by Thigpen and Downing suggests, MacIntyre's is a "radical" communitarianism, it is not because he fails to give attention to individuality. It is radical because the choice of traditional communities which MacIntyre offers to the individual is between his traditional community and no community at all, between narrative individuality and no individuality at all.

As such, Hittinger's concern about how, on MacIntyre's account, the moral agent is to choose **between** different forms or types of communities becomes moot. But Hittinger's concern about the lack of metaphysical foundations per se for the sort of community MacIntyre **is** recommending is similar to the concern I have about MacIntyre's theory - that is, that narrative unity fails to give the foreigner a "starting point" which they can make sense of. These concerns are, in turn, similar to concerns expressed by liberal individualists to the effect that MacIntyre's is a far too radical communitarianism to allow for its consideration by anyone falling outside of the philosphical tradition to which it allies itself.

MacIntyre's only possible move around this objection, so far as I can tell, will be to claim that since outsiders cannot possibly make sense of **anything** given the lack of narrative unity in their lives, they ought just to take him at his word. But this move will at once raise the question of whether, under such circumstances, the outsider can really be the subject of their own enacted narrative - of whether they can ever be the author of, in addition to being an actor in, their own life story. It raises the question of how narrative unity actually "gets in there" in the **first** place. In order to answer this question, MacIntyre has got to venture beyond the realm of narrative unity either into the domain of metaphysics or into the domain of science. If MacIntyre continues to insist that the pre-narrative origins of moral philosophy and moral agency are not necessarily relevant to moral inquiry and moral action, he does so from an exceedingly privileged position. I therefore do not see how MacIntyre can get around this objection without, as Hittinger remarks, making moral philosophy less rational and more edifying.

Joseph Campbell saw the challenge for modern man quite differently from MacIntyre.[2] Unlike MacIntyre, he saw the stuff of modernity as eminently suitable to the mythification process. It was thus possible for **every** human being to be included in this process. Campbell, of course, was no moral philosopher. But **his** optimism in the face of contemporary spiritual disintegration is neither "startling"[3] nor disconcerting. And although we can now say that MacIntyre's optimism is explainable in virtue of what he takes to the success of his own project, that optimism is less than reassuring.

I cannot help but think at this point, that MacIntyre's response to the objections raised here would be somewhat Panglossian. Yet given the usual or even narrative notions about crime and punishment to which we adhere as a community and the implicit suggestion in MacIntyre's argument that any failure of narrative unity must result from an accident of sorts and never be the outcome of an intentional act, his tacit exclusion of so many from participation in the good for man seems completely unjustifiable.

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[2] Campbell's views here are inferred from his corpus and from his interviews with American television journalist Bill Moyer of the Public Broadcasting System shortly before Campbell's death in 1989.

[3] See p.1 of Introduction above.

I am very sympathetic to a limited role for narrative unity in the moral life of the individual. But it is not clear to me, nor is it to Russell Hittinger, that this role can be adequately taken up by moral **philosophy**. For, in closing, I feel forced to conclude that the appeal which narrative unity has for moral life is much more forcefully expressed by, **inter alia**, Margaret Mitchell at the end of **Gone With The Wind**[4] than by Alasdair MacIntyre throughout **After Virtue**:

> [Scarlet O'Hara is contemplating her lonely fate.]
>
> All she wanted was a breathing space in which to hurt, a quiet place to lick her wounds, a haven in which to plan her next campaign. She thought of Tara and it was as if a gentle cool hand were stealing over her heart...Suddenly she wanted Mammy desperately...Mammy, the last link with the old days. (733 GWW)

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[4] Mitchell, Margaret, **Gone With The Wind** [GWW], The MacMillan Company New York, 1936.

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